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PHILIP'S RESTITUTION.

BY
CHRISTIAN REID.

“REPRINTED FROM THE AVE MARIA.”

“AVE MARIA” OFFICE,
NOTRE DAME, IND.

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1888.

PHILIP'S RESTITUTION.

I.

A LARGE brown-stone house, of elaborate architecture, set in the midst of spacious grounds, where every art of the landscape-gardener had been called into service, and where the result was as perfect as taste and wealth could make it, was the home of Mr. James Thornton, one of the most noted millionaires of the city of Riverport. Not that millionaires were uncommon in Riverport, which, being on the border of the prosperous Southwest and West, had a fair proportion of these fortunate persons among its inhabitants ; but, beside the fact that Mr. Thornton was reputed to be one of the wealthiest, there were certain incidents in his career which gave a picturesque interest to it in the popular mind. For one thing, he had amassed his wealth in a very short

time ; and this is something which is always interesting to those who wish to do likewise, yet lack the necessary opportunity or ability. Not very many years had elapsed since he was only an ordinarily prosperous business man. Suddenly property had fallen into his hands, which almost immediately appreciated enormously in value. He at once entered largely into speculative investments, and, owing to good luck or good judgment, everything which he touched doubled his fortune, until in a few years he reached the apex of prosperity.

The admiration of the average American mind is deeply stirred by such a career, and Mr. Thornton tasted in full measure the respect and adulation which are paid to financial success in a country that has not indeed a monopoly of the *cullus* of the golden calf, but where it exists to a greater degree than in any other. He enjoyed the nineteenth century equivalents of those salutations in the market-place which the Pharisees loved, and was not mistaken in

feeling himself an object of mingled admiration and envy to almost all his fellow-citizens.

Almost, but not quite all. In Riverport, as elsewhere, a small minority did not bow the knee to the modern Baal, and among them were a few who knew how much this man had altered for the worse since the tide of his prosperity had set in. In that day, which now seemed the day of small things, yet when he had possessed all that was necessary for comfort and independence of life, he had been liberal according to his means, and kindly and genial in disposition. As wealth increased his liberality decreased, while his character changed and hardened. The hands which were put out so eagerly to grasp every promising investment, lost their hold on the charities of life ; and the eyes which were turned intently on the interests of earth, forgot to look toward Heaven.

Such forgetfulness is common with men so absorbed, but it was aggravated in this

man's case by the fact that he had been educated a Catholic. It was true that he had early fallen into habits of indifference to religion ; but, although this indifference led him to marry a Protestant, it did not lead him to deny his faith until after the era of his remarkable prosperity began. It was then that he turned his back upon the religion of his fathers, that he was seen no more in Catholic churches, and that finally his old friends heard with sorrow that he appeared now and then with his wife in the fashionable temple of "High" Episcopalianism, where she worshipped.

For he had married rather late in life, into a family of great social prominence, and his wife was as much a type of a fine lady as the conditions of American life can readily produce. With inherited refinement she possessed a grace of manner and charm of disposition which went far to atone for the fact that she did not possess a great deal of intellect. It would have been impossible, however, for the heart of a millionaire to

desire a better show-piece for wealth, or a woman who understood better all its uses—in a worldly way. She had the personal appearance of a duchess—an ideal duchess—and such fine taste, that the appointments of her household and the style of her entertainments formed a standard which others eagerly imitated.

These people had no children of their own, but circumstances had made it possible for them to adopt two, whose presence gave that life and animation of youth which would else have been lacking in their luxurious home. One of these was an orphan niece of Mrs. Thornton ; the other, a nephew of Mr. Thornton. The latter was also an orphan, but his father had been wise enough to guard him from a great danger by his dying act. He had inserted in his will a special provision stating how and where the boy should be educated. “For I can’t trust James in this matter,” he had said in explanation. “If he has not absolutely denied his faith, he is so indifferent to it that he

would as soon send Philip to a Protestant college as not. But I am determined that he shall have a Catholic education. After that, if he loses his religion it will be his own fault, not mine."

It was to this wise forethought that Philip Thornton owed the years which he spent in a Catholic university. His uncle made no objection to carrying out the provision of the will ; but there could be no doubt that, left to himself, he would have preferred one of the Protestant centers of learning. The only allusion which he ever made to the matter was to say, when the young fellow was on the point of leaving home : "It is a pity to handicap you for the race of life in this way, Phil ; but it was your father's wish. And, after all, it will not matter—for *you*. It would matter if you had your way to make in the world ; but the way has been made for you. There will be no difficulties in your case ; you can indulge yourself in believing what you please."

It was not until long afterward that the

significance of these words occurred to the young man. But by that time he had learned that religion was a subject which it was not possible to discuss with his uncle. The most avowed materialist could not have ignored the spiritual side of life more completely than Mr. Thornton. Immersed in worldly interests, he seemed never to give it a thought ; and if the subject was, by any chance, presented to his consideration, he did not hesitate to indicate his distaste for it.

When Philip first returned from the religious associations that had surrounded his college life, this indifference of his uncle — an indifference amounting to hostility — seemed to him terrible. But such is the effect of habit and example, that he soon grew accustomed to the atmosphere into which he had fallen, and before very long it ceased to excite any surprise in his mind. He, too, began to say to himself that religion was very well—in its place. But that place grew smaller and smaller to his apprehension as the pleasures and interests of

the world opened before him. It was indeed difficult to think of any other existence when everything contributed to make his present one so delightful. Youth, wealth, leisure were all his, together with a nature eminently susceptible of enjoyment, and formed to give and receive pleasure. He did not cease to practice his religion, only it fell more and more into the background of his life, while the foreground was filled with those amusements which are so charming to the young and gay of heart.

It was soon apparent that his social tastes were very pleasing to his uncle. Like many men who have had no social success of their own, he placed an exaggerated value on such success, and preferred to see Philip a man of fashion rather than a man of business. The matter might have been different had the young man shown any qualities of a spendthrift ; but he was so scrupulous not to exceed the means placed at his disposal, that Mr. Thornton was forced to urge him now and then to greater expenditure.

"Don't hesitate," he said, "to do things handsomely — as handsomely as possible. Money can not be spent to better advantage than in securing your social position. There is no reason why you should not be at the head of everything, with your appearance, your qualities, and your means."

"*Your* means, rather," said the young man, laughing a little. "I sometimes think that it is time I began to see about making something for myself."

"Nonsense!" said his uncle. "Don't you come into the office and write a few letters now and then? I look upon you as my son, and I have other ends in view for you than money-making. At present I desire that you spend money freely, and make yourself popular. After a while we shall see."

It was agreeable advice to a young man with the world already at his feet, to spend money freely, and make himself popular. It might have been dangerous advice to many, but Mr. Thornton, who was a shrewd

judge of human nature, would not have offered it had he not been sure of his nephew's character—had he not observed him closely, and tested him well. Gay, ardent, pleasure-loving though he might be, there was a depth and strength of character in Philip which prevented him from being inclined to vicious excesses. Mr. Thornton recognized this, even while he refused to acknowledge to himself where this strength had been gained.

It was certainly a pleasant household of which the young man found himself a part when he finally settled at home. His aunt had always been kind to him, as she was by nature kind to everyone ; and he had always admired her exceedingly. Her grace and refinement had fascinated his eyes even when he was a boy, and they were not likely to fascinate him less now, that he had learned the value of such gifts. And there was another gracious presence also in this household—a girl who was like a white rose in delicate loveliness, with the same aroma

of refinement that Mrs. Thornton possessed, and a slight haughtiness which was foreign to the elder woman, yet did not misbecome the younger. Constance Irving was indeed a product of the same conditions which had produced her aunt ; but, as a strain of different blood must result in different characteristics, there were some essential differences between them. The foundation of the girl's character was firmer and harder than that of the woman ; her disposition was less gentle, and her intellect keener. These things, however, were as yet in abeyance, waiting for circumstances to develop them. To everyone, including those of her own household, Miss Irving seemed a model of all that was most charming in young ladyhood.

When or how it became clear to Philip that his uncle and aunt desired him to marry this very attractive girl, he could not tell ; but there was no doubt that it had been made sufficiently plain, although no direct word had been spoken. He had not the

least objection. Let him look where he would, he saw no one so lovely, so refined, so charming as Constance ; and, though he had known her too long and too intimately to fall in love with her, he felt sure that he could not admire her more if he were ever so much in love. Whether the wishes of their elders had been made as plain to her as to him, and, if so, how she regarded these wishes, he could not tell. She treated him exactly as she had always done; and he knew that if any change in their relations took place, the initiative must come from him.

But there seemed no reason for haste in making such a change. All their youth was before them to enjoy, and why should they lay a fetter upon it? Philip knew instinctively that Constance would feel, with himself, that there was no reason, and that she would probably decline to be fettered. Just as he wanted to enjoy, without any sense of bondage, the pleasures which the world spread before him, so, no doubt, did

she ; the more that the incense of homage and admiration offered her on all sides would very sensibly diminish were she once known to be "engaged."

So no word that could be construed to such meaning was uttered by any one concerned. Mr. and Mrs. Thornton were silent, through the influence of the latter rather than by the desire of the former. "Do not urge the matter," she said, "or you might provoke opposition. Let them alone. When they have enjoyed themselves sufficiently they will see the wisdom of what we desire."

"Why should they not settle this, and then enjoy themselves as much as they like?" asked Mr. Thornton, somewhat impatiently.

"Oh! that would be different," said Mrs. Thornton. "They would feel — bound, you know. And, of course, a girl who is known to be engaged is socially at a disadvantage. Constance ought to have some good of her beauty and attractiveness before she gives

up her reign. She will be as great a belle as I was, I hope."

"And what good will it do her?" demanded Mr. Thornton.

The delicate, faded cheek of the woman, whose sweetest recollection was of that past bellehood, flushed.

"It is a great pleasure to her now, and it will be a great gratification to her to remember hereafter," she said, with dignity. "I can not consent that she should be deprived of such a—distinction."

"It will be a dearly-bought distinction if she takes a fancy to marry some one of the men who are dangling around her all the time," said Mr. Thornton.

"There are so many of them that she is not likely to think of any one in particular," answered his wife. "And you must see that there are few who have Philip's advantages."

Mr. Thornton did see that, and it consoled him a little, even while he muttered

something not very complimentary to feminine vanity. But he knew that on this point his wife would be immovable, so he wisely gave up the discussion.

II.

It often chances that events which seem to us very trivial at the time of their occurrence, are regarded afterwards, with clearer sight, as turning-points in our lives. Such an event occurred one evening to Philip Thornton, when his aunt asked him if he did not intend to accompany Constance and herself to a ball, which was to be one of the chief events of the fashionable season.

"I can not have the pleasure of accompanying you," he answered; "but I shall see you there."

"Why can you not accompany us?" asked Mrs. Thornton.

"Because I have another engagement for the evening," was the reply. "It will not keep me from the ball, but will make me later than you will probably wish to be in arriving. I did not imagine that you would care for my escort," he added after a moment.

"It is always desirable to have an escort, especially at such a ball as this," said Mrs. Thornton.

Philip raised his eyebrows. They were in the drawing-room alone together, after dinner, and he looked at his aunt in surprise. Her tone seemed to indicate that, for some reason, she *did* care for his attendance.

"Really," he said, "there are always so many of Constance's admirers on hand that it did not occur to me—"

He paused ; for Mrs. Thornton looked at him, and something in her glance stopped his words.

"It might occur to you," she said, "that there are reasons why Constance should not be left too much to her admirers."

Philip understood her, but it was the clearest speech that had ever passed between them on this subject; and before he could decide what to answer, a peal at the door-bell cut the conversation short.

Here entered a gentleman who, as a distant connection of Mrs. Thornton, was very inti-

mate in the house, and who was also one of the most devoted of Constance's many attendants. Jack Bellamy, as he was familiarly known, was a social favorite, an authority on social points, and a leader in all social matters. A handsome, graceful man, he had also fair talents, which might have enabled him to do something in the world if he had not loved pleasure inordinately, and devoted himself to making a pure social reputation.

"Ah!" said Philip as he entered, "here is an attendant that leaves nothing to be desired. I was just saying to my aunt," he added, turning to Bellamy, "that I can not have the pleasure of accompanying her to the ball to-night; but I am sure you will see her safely there."

"I shall be delighted," Bellamy answered. "But why should you debar yourself from the pleasure also? What are you going to do?"

"Oh! I have another engagement, that will occupy me for a few hours," said

Philip. "But I shall appear in time to claim two or three dances—remember that, Constance, and keep them for me."

The young lady whom he addressed entered at the moment, and advanced up the long room toward them, its rich colors throwing into relief her graceful figure. She was dressed in silvery blue, with a crystal trimming that made a beautiful effect. Diamonds shone on her fair neck and arms, and a diamond arrow caught the soft masses of her brown hair. Never had she looked lovelier—more like some delicate creation of finest porcelain—than as she paused and stood under the chandelier, that showered its radiance down on her, and made her seem flashing with light, while she looked at Philip.

"What is that?" she asked. "Why should I keep dances for you? You must take your chances like everyone else."

"I am not going to the ball with you," he answered. "I shall make my appearance later, and of course by that time your ball-

book will be filled if you don't keep some dances for me. You will, however, I am sure."

"Don't be too sure," she answered. "Why should you not go with us? That is the proper thing for you to do."

"It did not occur to me in that light," he answered, smiling; "and I have made another engagement, which I—do not like to break. I know that you never have any lack of attendants."

"Certainly not," she answered, a little haughtily, and then she turned and held out her hand to Bellamy. "One can always depend on *you*," she said.

Involuntarily as it seemed, Mrs. Thornton looked again at Philip. He understood the inference, and knew that she expected him to yield and declare himself at their service; but the thing appeared to him at once so trivial and so unreasonable, that he would not yield. "They have really not the least need of me, and I have told them that I have an engagement," he said to himself. "I will not give it up for nothing."

So after a little while he took his departure, promising to see them later, and walked into the city. As he went, he had rather an uncomfortable sense of dissatisfaction with himself. It irritated him a little to remember how thoroughly at home and at ease Bellamy had looked as he sat by Constance, watching her draw on and button her long gloves. After all, perhaps he ought to have gone with them, or else have plainly stated the nature of his engagement. Why had he not done the latter? Not even to himself would he acknowledge that it was because he knew it would have excited a smile of amusement, with perhaps a tinge of scorn. For he had promised to attend a Church fair, of which this was the last night. Only that day he had met one of his college friends, who had urged him to go. "Don't you know that they are straining every nerve to pay the church debt?" he said. "A fellow like you, made of money—what do you mean by not helping them?"

"I—really I never thought of it," an-

swered Philip. "But I'll go to-night, I promise you."

"If nothing more attractive turns up, I suppose," said the other, who had not much faith in him.

"Whatever turns up, I'll go," said Philip. "If you doubt my word, perhaps you'll be kind enough to take me in charge. I will call for you about nine o'clock."

"Very well," responded the other, with a laugh; "though I can tell you my pockets are nearly empty."

So it was that, having reached the heart of the city, Philip presently turned into a street sacred to the legal profession, and made his unceremonious entrance into an office which bore the name of F. X. Graham. The bearer of the name looked up from an imposing leather-bound volume as he entered, showing a strong but rugged face.

"So you have come!" he said. "I did not expect you."

"Apparently you have not much respect

for my assertions," answered Philip. "Did I not tell you I was coming?"

"Oh! yes," said Graham, closing his book; "but I remembered afterwards the grand ball to-night, and I supposed of course you would be there."

"So I shall be there, but I can attend to this matter first, I suppose."

"Certainly. There will not be much to detain you. You have only to make up your mind how much money you will spend, and to spend it—that is all."

Philip put his hand in his pocket. "I wonder I did not think," he said, "that it would have been easier just to give you a cheque. I believe I will do it yet."

"It would be easier," said Graham; "but, on the whole, I think you had better go and spend the money at the fair. It shows interest, you know, and that is something you are not overburdened with."

Philip flushed. "Perhaps you are not the best judge of that," he said. But the next moment his sense of honesty made him

add: "You are right enough, though; I *don't* take much interest in religious matters. But I am willing to give, to the extent of my means, whatever is needed."

"That is better than nothing," said Graham, rising and putting his book carefully aside. "But, if you will pardon the liberty, I am bound to add that you are ready to give because it costs you nothing. A little interest would be better for the health of your soul. Without it you will be likely to go some day as—others have gone."

He stopped himself before saying "as your uncle has gone," but Philip knew very well that it had been on the end of his tongue, and it seemed to make reply impossible on his own part. That *was* the end to which indifference and worldliness led. He knew it well; and knowing it, he seemed to see before him the end to which he would also come.

"You are always a cheerful prophet," he said after a minute. "But if I am to show interest in the buying and selling of useless

articles for the health of my soul, come let us go. I have not much time to spare."

They went out together, and walked a few blocks to the hall where the fair was taking place. They found it crowded when they entered, and although it was the last night, the tables had not lost their attractive appearance, and traffic was very brisk. Philip had not many acquaintances—for his social lines did not lie much in Catholic circles—but he was himself sufficiently well known; and it was so impossible to him not to enter with spirit into whatever he undertook, that he was so engrossed not only in buying, but in assisting to sell all that he could.

Graham watched him for a while with amusement, then he seemed to drift away, and when Philip presently looked around he had some difficulty in finding him. But after an interval he perceived him talking to a young lady who was sitting behind one of the tables, but who did not appear to be taking much trouble to dispose of her wares. This, however, was not because she was en-

grossed by Graham's conversation. Philip rather doubted whether she heard half of it, there was so much indifference in her air, and now and then her eyes wandered wearily over the noisy crowd.

It was these eyes which first attracted the young man's attention, they were so large, so dark, so lustrous,—such eyes as are seldom seen except in an Italian or a Spanish face. Noticing this, he also noticed that there was the nobleness of outline, the statue-like grace of the Latin races, in the head and features. Her profile, as she turned it might have been cut on an antique cameo, with the dark hair drawn back just as it was, in a low knot. It was a face of the loftiest type—fine, clear, sensitive—and Philip caught his breath as he looked at it.

“Who on earth can she be?” he said to himself ; and then he walked directly up to Graham.

“I have been wondering what had become of you,” he said, addressing him suddenly.

Graham turned, looking a little embarrassed. "Oh — is it you?" he asked. "I thought I left you very well employed."

"So I was," Philip answered. "But I think it only right to bestow my attentions impartially. I have come to see what I can find to buy here."

"Not much, I am afraid," said Graham, glancing around. He moved away from the lady to whom he had been talking, and addressed a young girl who shared the duty of presiding over the table. "What have you that a gentleman anxious to spend money can buy, Miss Julia?" he inquired.

"Oh! a great deal," replied the girl, eagerly. "Here is a lovely hand-painted screen. Perhaps he will take that?"

Philip took the screen in his hand, as if he were critically examining the conventionalized flowers that adorned it; but in truth he hardly saw them, for he was thinking that Graham's conduct was churlish in the highest degree. "I would not have believed the fellow could have been so selfish and

rude," he reflected — rather unreasonably; for, on the face of the matter, Graham was certainly not called upon to interrupt his conversation in order that Philip might make some purchases. But an instinct assured the latter that his friend was perfectly aware of his motive for approaching him, and so he resented the coolness which had handed him over to Miss Julia.

This young lady discovered nothing amiss in her new customer, however. He bought the screen and various other trifles, paid for them liberally, and then carelessly gave the most of them back. When he had finished he turned, to find Graham at his elbow. Involuntarily he glanced around for the dark-eyed girl whose appearance had so much attracted him. She had moved to some distance, and was engaged with some one else; but again her air of distinction, and the noble beauty of her classic head, struck his eye. He stood still, looking at her.

"Well," said Graham, after waiting a moment, "are you ready to go?"

"No," Philip answered, with quiet decision. "I want you to introduce me to that young lady yonder."

There was a short pause, during which the two men regarded each other—Philip with an air of expectation, Graham with a reluctance which must have been apparent to the dullest observation. At length he said:

"This is not a suitable place for introductions, and she is—engaged."

"Whether or not it is a suitable place for introductions, you have introduced me to at least a dozen other people," said Philip. "But no matter; I only wanted to see if you would do it. I am satisfied now."

He turned quickly on his heel; but as he walked away, Graham was by his side.

"I know you think me churlish," he said, as they passed down the hall.

"Yes," Philip answered, "if you care to know it, I do; but, as I have already remarked, it is not a matter of the least importance."

"You do not understand," said Graham, in a low tone. "I could not act otherwise; I could not introduce you to *her* without asking her permission —"

"And what prevented you from asking her permission?" demanded Philip, coldly, as he paused.

"The fact that she would not have given it," replied the other; "and that would have been awkward for both of you."

Philip was so much astonished at this most unexpected reply, that he stopped short—they were now outside the hall—and stood looking at his companion by the light of the lamps flaring over the door.

"I can not imagine," he said at length, "that you are in earnest. What possible reason could there be for this young lady refusing to know *me*?"

"It does seem extraordinary, no doubt, since young ladies are not in the habit of refusing to know you," said Graham, with a slight smile. "But perhaps when you know

who this young lady is, the mystery will not be so great. She is Miss Percival."

"And who is Miss Percival? I never heard of her before."

It was Graham's turn to stare somewhat.

"You have never heard of her father—of Robert Percival?" he said.

"Certainly not," answered Philip, decidedly. "I never, to my recollection, heard the name before."

"Ah!" said Graham. He made no other comment, but, turning, proceeded to walk on so silently that Philip presently asked, impatiently:

"What is the meaning of this? Who are the Percivals?"

"Who are the Percivals?" repeated Graham. He was silent still a minute before he answered: "Ask your uncle that question."

III.

Who are the Percivals? The question seemed to haunt Philip. He was too proud to ask further information of Graham after the latter had waived the inquiry and referred him to his uncle; but even at the moment he had felt that it would be impossible for him to go to his uncle with such a question. Why impossible he did not know, except that Graham's tone had been very significant; and deep in Philip's own heart was a consciousness, which he did not acknowledge even to himself, that there might be things in his uncle's life that he would not wish to know.

After parting with Graham he went to the ball; but slight as the occurrence at the fair had been, it left a recollection which marred his pleasure; for although he had not yet been forced to realize the fact in any keen degree, he was possessed of a nature so

sensitively strung that it vibrated to every touch. And this touch had been deeper than he imagined. In the midst of the gay scene in which he found himself, he saw before him constantly the dark eyes and the stately head of the girl who would have declined to know him. Perhaps the interest lay there. It was so extraordinary that any one should not wish to know *him*. Philip had no more than his due share of vanity, but he would have been singularly obtuse if he had not recognized his own popularity, and appreciated the kindness of the glances which many bright eyes bestowed upon him.

It struck him, however, that there was less kindness than usual in the glance of one pair of eyes. Constance received him rather coolly, and announced that her ball book was quite full. The fact in itself would not have concerned him, but it was a significant indication that she had been offended by his refusal to accompany them. He shrugged his shoulders a little as he turned away. It was a pity; everything had gone wrong this

evening; and that, too, when he had been moved by the best intentions. Evidently, good intentions were not sufficient to insure satisfactoriness of result in a decidedly unsatisfactory world.

This, which is an old story to most people, was rather new to Philip. Things had gone so smoothly with him up to this time—life had contained so few difficulties, complications or perplexities—that even a slight jar seemed to him a reversal rather than a fulfilment of ordinary conditions.

The Percival question was the first thought in his mind when he waked the next day; but morning brought no light by which to determine how to solve it. He still felt it impossible to ask his uncle, as Graham advised. And indeed what reason was there why he should ask any one? The Percivals, of whom he had never heard before, certainly did not concern him in the least. He recognized that very plainly, and yet he felt that he would like to know why

Miss Percival would have declined his acquaintance.

It was, however, with the final determination to put Miss Percival out of his mind that he went down stairs to breakfast. He found Mrs. Thornton in the breakfast-room, and the smile with which she greeted him did not indicate any consciousness of offense on her part. She made a pretty picture as she sat in a morning-dress of quilted violet satin, with a becoming lace trifle of a cap on her soft hair, by the side of the perfectly-appointed table. It occurred to Philip as he entered that twenty years hence Constance would look just like this, and certainly no man could desire a more gracious presence to preside in his household.

"If it is possible," he said, as he sat down, "that your looks are an accurate indication of your feelings, I need hardly ask if you have recovered from the dissipation of last night."

"Oh! yes, I have recovered," she answered. "It was not a very severe dissipa-

tion. That is the advantage of being merely a chaperon — one is not fatigued much."

"I am glad to hear there is some advantage connected with it," continued Philip. "It seems to me that it would be awfully fatiguing. But I doubt whether Constance looks as fresh as you do this morning."

"Constance has not appeared yet," said Mrs. Thornton, smiling. "I fancy she will look fresh enough when she comes."

"She looked very well last night," replied Philip. "I do not think I ever saw her look better. I was sorry that she would not dance with me."

Mrs. Thornton glanced at him quickly, but the easy quietness of his tone was reflected in his manner. Evidently his regret was of a very composed nature.

"That," she said, "was your own fault."

"If so," he answered, "that is chiefly why I am sorry — because it seems that both yourself and Constance thought I should have accompanied you. Believe me, if I

had imagined such a thing for a moment, I would have done so."

"I suggested that it would be well."

"True, but since Bellamy was on hand I did not feel that I was needed, and I had made an engagement which I disliked to break."

"It must have been a very special engagement," said Mrs. Thornton a little dryly.

"It was," he answered. "I had promised to attend a church fair, of which it was the last night."

"Oh! a church fair!" The smile Philip had anticipated came around her lips — a smile of mingled wonder and amusement. "That was very good of you, indeed," she said; but the wonder was evident in her tone. "I hope it was — a success."

"I don't know," he replied; "but I hope so, too. At least I did my small endeavor to aid in making it so. I bought a number of things — screens and the like — out of

which I hoped you might, perhaps, select something you would care to have."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Thornton, looking at him kindly. His affectionate deference had long ago made her very fond of him. "You must tell Constance why you did not go with us," she added, presently.

"Pray mention it if you think it of sufficient importance," responded Philip. "I could not have conceived that it would matter to Constance, who has always so many attendants."

"Yes, she has a great many," said Mrs. Thornton; "but still —"

She stopped, unwilling to repeat her words of the night before, that Constance should not be left too much to these attendants. If Philip did not see this for himself, Constance's aunt could not make it plainer to him.

Her pause, however, was significant, and Philip looked at her as if expecting her to go on. When she did not, he said, lightly:

"But still she does not like certain things

to be disregarded? I understand, and I shall be more careful in future. Yet I could not have thought she would refuse to give me even one dance. I feel aggrieved about that, for there can be no doubt that she was the belle of the ball. There was no one present to compare to her."

"I thought not," said Mrs. Thornton, with delicate pride.

But even as he spoke what perversity of recollection brought before the young man a different face and figure? He looked at the fire, as if he saw it there, and was silent for a moment. Then he said, with an abrupt impulse:

"Do you chance to know any people named Percival?"

"Percival?" repeated Mrs. Thornton. "No—yes—that is, I had a slight acquaintance once with the man who was your uncle's partner. But I believe he is dead now."

"I did not know that my uncle ever had

a partner," said Philip, regarding her with surprise. "Are you quite sure?"

"Oh! perfectly sure." She spoke with ease; evidently she knew no reason for shrinking from the subject or the name. "It was long ago. He brought the business, by some bad management, nearly to the verge of ruin. Your uncle had great difficulty in saving it. But Mr. Percival acted very well. He gave up his property to make good what he had lost, and then he retired."

Philip caught his breath.

"But if he gave up his property, was not *he* ruined?" he asked.

"He was much poorer, of course," answered Mrs. Thornton, composedly; "but that could not be helped. It was his own fault, you know."

"Yes," Philip assented, with a vagueness equal to that of the information he had received. He felt that upon such information as this no judgment was possible. It was entirely probable that his uncle had been

in the right; for the sense of injury on the other side proved nothing. He knew — who does not know? — how wrong yet how obstinate people can sometimes be in the animosities which arise out of such transactions.

“I never heard of the man before,” he said, after a short silence; “but I saw at the fair last night a very striking-looking girl, who, I was told was a Miss Percival.”

“His daughter most likely,” replied Mrs. Thornton. “I remember that he married a very beautiful woman, the daughter of a Spanish consul. But they were never in society much, and of course dropped out altogether after his misfortune.”

“Do you know,” said Philip, “whether they — that is, he — blamed my uncle for his course in the matter?”

Mrs. Thornton looked surprised. “I don’t know at all,” she said; “but I can not see how it was possible; for your uncle was certainly in the right. I assure you that Mr. Percival brought him nearly to the verge of bankruptcy.”

"Well, naturally 'who breaks pays,'" continued the young man. "But it does seem hard," he added, as if to himself: "one to go on to such prosperity, the other to drop down to ruin. It is easy to fancy some bitterness on the other side."

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Thornton, indifferently; "but it was his own fault."

His own fault! The words echoed through Philip's mind after he left her, still sitting in the pretty, sunshiny room, and went himself into the bright, clear chill of the outer air. *Was* it his own fault? Of course, if so, it was right that he should have borne the consequences; or, at least, life was inexorable in demanding such a penalty. But if — if it had been failure, mistake, or anything except deliberate wrong-doing, surely these consequences were hard.

Philip had not been conscious at the time of observing what Miss Percival wore the evening before, but he remembered now that it was a simple black dress, relieved only by some soft lace at throat and hands. It was

true that she had looked like a princess even in this; yet what a contrast when he placed her in imagination beside Constance in her exquisite toilette, flashing with diamonds! The two figures seemed to symbolize and emphasize the wide difference in the fortunes of the two men who had once stood on an equal level. And while all things had prospered with one, the other had fallen — by his own fault? Yet, why then, had Graham said with so much significance, “Ask your uncle that question”?

The idea of following this advice was as far from Philip's mind as ever. He wondered a little whether he should ever know the exact truth of the matter, but he could imagine no circumstances in which it would be possible for him to ask an explanation of his uncle. “And, after all, how does it possibly concern me?” he said to himself, with a sense of positive irritation. “I wish I had never gone to the fair — I wish I had never seen that girl! No doubt if I had talked to her I should have found her com-

monplace enough. And this old story of a broken business connection — what is it to me? I will not give it another thought."

Such resolutions are, as a general rule, more easily made than kept, but Philip managed to keep this with tolerable success. His life was indeed too full of occupation and pleasure to admit of much thought on matters that did not immediately enter into it. In the course of a few days he had almost forgotten the Percival matter; or, at least, it lay in abeyance in his mind, as so many things do that we fancy forgotten, until some day they startle us by waking to vivid life.

A considerable length of time elapsed, however, before the touch came which was destined to waken this. The gay season was at its height, and Philip was not again guilty of neglecting such degree of attendance as Miss Irving held to be due on his part. It was not very much, but enough to show the world his rightful place. That was all the young lady desired. Anything more

might have indicated that she was bound in some degree, whereas she only wished it to be understood that Philip was at her service and disposal.

To this Philip on his own part had no objection. He entertained no doubt that he would some day marry Constance, and, if the prospect did not fill him with rapture, it was not in the least disagreeable. If she had wished more devoted attention, he would have felt bound to offer it; but his quickness of apprehension told him exactly what she did want, and he was somewhat relieved that it was no more. It left him free, and he did not wish to be bound just yet.

IV.

So the weeks rolled by; the season drew near its end as Lent approached, and Philip would have said that he had forgotten the Percivals, when a slight incident occurred which had a very direct influence in reviving the recollection. . It chanced one evening, at a social gathering, that he was asked to sing, and complied with the request. The song selected was "*Les Rameux*," and he sang it in a clear, mellow voice, which left little to be desired in the way of natural quality, and was fairly well cultivated. When he turned from the piano a lady of great musical taste, whom he knew very well, and who chanced to be also a Catholic, beckoned him to her.

"You have an excellent voice," she said, as he sat down beside her. "What do you mean by making no use of it?"

Philip raised his eyebrows. "What use

should I make of it?" he inquired. "Do you think I ought to join an opera troop? I am afraid it is not good enough for that."

"Hardly, perhaps," she said; "though I have heard voices on the stage that were no better. But I was thinking of something else. Do you know that we need good voices very much in the Cathedral choir?"

"Well, yes," he answered, smiling; "I may say that I am aware of it. I generally go there on Sunday."

"And you have never thought of helping us to better things — you with such a voice?"

"No," he said, honestly; "I never thought of it; but if I had, what then? You would not expect me to go to the director and say, 'Your choir is very bad; I offer my voice to improve it.'"

"The director would have been much obliged if you had done so. He bewails in touching terms his inability to render good music as it should be rendered. He will welcome you — I think he will embrace you

— when he hears you sing. You must go to him.”

“My dear Mrs. King!” — Philip was a little dismayed — “I should like very much, of course, to assist, but I have really no time; and to be bound to attendance in a choir — I fear that it is quite impossible.”

“Why impossible?” asked Mrs. King, looking at him with bright, keen eyes. “What have you to do that should make attendance in a choir difficult to you? Oh, how indifferent people are!” she added, as if thinking aloud. “What a great privilege it is to take part in offering the solemn worship of the Church to God! Yet here is a young man, with nothing in the world to do, who says he has not time for it.”

Philip flushed. “Are you quite sure I have nothing in the world to do?” he asked.

She made a little gesture of indifference.

“You have a few things, I presume,” she said; “but nothing that could interfere with this. Oh! I know your life, and that of others like you. You have time for every

amusement, every demand of pleasure and business, but none for anything relating to the service of God. Well, it is an old story; but I thought you might be willing to give such a little thing as your voice now and then. It seems I was mistaken, so we will say no more about it."

"No," said Philip — who had a conscience which sometimes stung him a little — "you were not mistaken. When you put it in that light, I can only say that my voice is at your service. But you really must not expect me to go and offer it to the director, especially since there is danger of his embracing me."

"Oh!" she said, smiling, "I will see him, and arrange the matter. He and I work and groan over the music together. But we have secured a fine soprano lately, and now with your voice I feel encouraged. Come to my house the first evening that you are disengaged, and we will try some music. I do not think you will regret your decision."

It is generally rash to indulge in proph-

ecy, but Mrs. King proved to be right in saying that Philip would not regret his decision. He had a real love for music, and was soon deeply interested in the great harmonies placed before him. The director of the Cathedral choir chanced to be not only an accomplished musician, but one whose taste and knowledge had been formed in the best schools. Words were hardly strong enough to express his contempt and disgust for the operatic order of music, which is unfortunately so common in Catholic churches. And yet he did not go to the other extreme, and demand only Gregorian tones. He recognized that between these two lies the world of majestic harmony, that has taken its inspiration from the solemn tone of the Church's chant, yet lends to it the grace and variety of figured music, and of which Palestrina is the supreme master.

But a surprise that was altogether apart from the music, awaited Philip on the first Sunday that he made his appearance in the choir-loft of the Cathedral. Among the

eyes turned curiously toward him was one pair, that sent something between a thrill and a shock through him,—a pair of forgotten dark, lustrous, Spanish eyes. “Ah!” he said to himself, “Miss Percival!” He did not know whether he was glad or sorry to see her again, to have the question which he could not solve reopened, and to ask himself vainly once more whose had been the fault in that past transaction. He found now that he had not forgotten it at all; his interest had only been laid aside, as it were; and one glance from the eyes, which did not wander toward him again, had been sufficient to revive it.

He had some thoughts to spare for the present, however. He wondered a little if Miss Percival, like himself, was a newcomer in the choir, and felt tolerably certain that she must be. Surely none of the indifferent voices to which he was accustomed to listen had been hers. “She does not look like a person who would undertake to do a thing unless she could do it well,” he said, men-

tally, with a glance at the face, which was not less notable in its lines than he remembered it to be.

He felt justified in the accuracy of his judgment when the music began. Never before had the clear soprano, which rose above all the other tones, sounded through the arches of the roof that now echoed its cadences. Philip, who had not much to sing, on this his first appearance, held his breath to listen to those soaring notes, so thrilling in their sweetness, so crystalline in their purity. "She sings like a seraph!" was his thought ; for what power was there in the tones that seemed to carry the soul upward in adoration ? It is a power which the finest voices more often lack than possess, since the possessors of fine voices are usually thinking rather of themselves than of what they sing ; but one hears it now and then, especially among religious. And hearing it once, it is easy to realize how music may become truly the handmaid of

religion, lifting the soul on wings of divine harmony to the very gates of Paradise.

As he listened, Philip found himself looking toward the distant altar with a new sense of devotion ; a spark of living fire seemed to touch his tepid feelings, his indifferent heart. When, after the Elevation, this voice rose alone through the hushed silence, in the exquisite solo of the *Benedictus* from Gounod's *Messe Solennelle*, it seemed like a call to worship, which no soul could disregard. "*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini*," sang the silvery tones, and they helped one heart at least to realize with quickening force Who had come in the Name of the Lord on that altar, before which the priest stood so silently, and around which the acolytes with their shining tapers knelt like sculptured figures.

V.

WHEN Mass was over, Philip encountered Mrs. King at the door of the church, and she at once took possession of him. "One did not hear much of *you*," she said; "but is not the new soprano a great success? I had no idea how beautiful her voice was until I heard it to-day."

"It is very beautiful," said Philip. "And there is a quality in it that I never heard before—a silver purity that makes one fancy what the voices of angels may be. One did not think that one was listening to an opera to-day."

"No," said Mrs. King, with a smile. "There is no operatic suggestion in Alice Percival's voice or style. She sings like one of the boy *soprani* who have been trained to the service of the Sanctuary—so devoutly, so simply, and with such an utter lack of self-consciousness."

"She brought to my mind," said Philip, "the description of a voice which I saw the other day in a French novel, '*les sons donnaient la sensation d'une musique trop idéale pour être humaine ; on eût dit une âme qui chantait.*'" *

"That is very pretty," said Mrs. King. "And the secret of the whole thing is, that it *was* a soul that sang. With most people it is only a voice. But her soul has a part in all that Alice Percival does."

"You know her, then — personally?"

"Oh ! yes, very well. She is as charming as her voice, and quite original, too — altogether a girl in a thousand."

"And yet one never meets her in society," said Philip, half interrogatively.

"They are poor, you know," replied Mrs. King ; "and society — *your* order of society — is not partial to poor people. Besides, she has no time for it."

"What does she do ?"

* The sounds were those of music too ideal to be human ; it might be said it was the soul that sang.

"She teaches music — you can judge how well — and takes care of her mother, who is an almost helpless invalid."

"Does the family consist only of the mother and daughter?"

"That is all. The father is dead."

Philip was aware of the latter fact, but he had thought that there might be a son — half a dozen sons, perhaps, for that matter — and it was with something of a shock that he heard of two women left alone to face the world. His countenance settled into grave lines as he walked on silently. The question that had tormented him before returned, and he asked himself again whose had been the fault. Granting that it was entirely that of the dead Percival, surely, for the sake of old association, his uncle might have done something for the widow and daughter whom he had left.

After parting with Mrs. King, these thoughts haunted him, as he walked along the fashionable avenue, lined with handsome houses, which led to his home. Well-

dressed throngs from the different churches filled the sidewalks, but, as he acknowledged salutation after salutation, his mind was far away. He was asking himself if it was not possible that his uncle might yet do something—if he knew. Even if it were true that Percival had once brought him to the verge of ruin, he had so successfully surmounted that danger, his fortune was now so secure and so large, that he could well afford to forget the danger, and think only of the need of those who were the innocent victims of past wrong-doing.

“And I surely believe that he will!” the young man said, hopefully, to himself. “Who has such good reason as I to know how liberal he is? And if, as may readily be, they will not accept aid directly from him, there are ways and means of helping people without their own knowledge.”

It was an attractive castle in the air—a castle in which Alice Percival no longer needed to give music-lessons, and her invalid mother had every comfort—that he

had erected by the time he reached the stately house, set in spacious, well-ordered grounds, on the outskirts of the city, where life moved on such easy wheels of luxury and wealth. As he approached he looked at it as a stranger might have looked, and perhaps for the first time there occurred to him an idea of what life would be without the great lubricator, money. A stern, a narrow, a repulsive thing, he felt, shuddering a little ; and the thought only quickened his desire to relieve those who had fallen into the hopeless slough of poverty.

When he entered the house, voices and soft laughter issuing from the drawing-room seemed to invite him to enter ; and turning in under the rich curtains that draped the open door, he found that Miss Irving and Bellamy were the occupants of the room. The young lady was still in her out-door costume — a becoming toilette of dark-blue velvet, that enhanced all the delicate fairness of her tints — and Bellamy, in attire equally suggestive of fashionable dress-

parade, sat near her, holding his hat on his cane while he talked. Evidently they had both just come in. As Philip entered, his foot-fall on the soft, thick carpet did not attract their attention for a moment; then Constance turned her head, saw him and said :

“ Oh, here is Philip ! ”

Mr. Bellamy looked up and nodded easily. “ I hope you possess as much consciousness of virtue as we do,” he said. “ We have heard two sermons this morning.”

“ Have you ? ” replied Philip. “ No: that is a point in virtue beyond me. How did you manage it ? ”

“ We have heard one sermon and the conclusion of another,” corrected Constance. “ Some of the churches have services half an hour later than the others, you know ; and as we were coming from St. Athanasius’, we thought we would just drop in at Emmanuel, hoping to hear the choir. The preacher was concluding his sermon when we went in, but I did not hear much of it.”

"I did," said Bellamy; "and he seemed to be pitching into the very doctrines that we had just been informed at St. Athanasius' were the right ones to believe."

"I am sure you did not hear a word!" said Constance, coloring and casting a glance of rebuke at him — for, while they have no hesitation in acknowledging their differences among themselves, there are few Protestants who do not endeavor to ignore them in the presence of a Catholic.—"But the choir sang an anthem, and it was very good," she went on. "They have several fine voices. One was very like yours, Philip."

"Thanks for the implied compliment."

"Oh! I did not mean merely to imply it; of course you know that your voice is good. I only wish you would consent to sing in our choir at St. Athanasius'."

"My dear Constance," answered Philip, gravely, "I am an indifferent Catholic, it is true, but still a Catholic; so it is quite impossible for me to oblige you. If you wish to hear me sing, you must come to the Ca-

thedral. I have made my *début* in the choir there to-day."

"Have you indeed?" she asked, with interest. "We must go to hear you some day."

"I used to drop into the Cathedral occasionally to hear the music," said Bellamy; "but it has fallen off so much of late that I have discontinued the habit. I hope there is to be a change for the better."

"I think so," replied Philip. "The choir has a new director, and several new voices have been added lately,—one divine soprano," he continued, without reflection.

"Who?" asked Constance. "Any one that I know?"

"No," said Philip, a little vexed with himself; "you are hardly likely to know her. She is—a—Miss Percival."

"Miss Percival!" repeated Constance. She shook her head. "I never heard of her before."

"But I have," said Bellamy, so suddenly that Philip started, and looked at him ap-

prehensively. "A very handsome, dark-eyed girl, with a divine voice, as Thornton says. Oh! yes, I know who she is, and I have heard her sing at one or two musical houses. She ought to go on the stage."

"I disagree with you," said Philip. "Her voice is not suited to the stage; but it is perfectly in place where it is."

"No doubt," replied Bellamy. "You are in luck to have secured her. I shall resume my visits to the Cathedral after this information."

"But who is she?" asked Constance. "Surely a professional person, since I have never met her?"

Philip left Bellamy to answer, but he was distinctly conscious that the latter avoided his eye in doing so.

"Well, no—not exactly professional," he replied; "though I believe she teaches music or singing. It is a case of reduced circumstances, you see."

"How sad! I am always so sorry for people who have been rich and become poor,"

said Miss Irving, with the composure of one to whom the idea suggested was like thinking of a cannibal feast on the other side of the globe—something quite dreadful, but too far off to excite very lively emotion. “You are not going?” she said, as Bellamy rose to his feet. “Why not stay to luncheon?”

“Because I have a conscience, and that conscience suggests that I should not become a regular institution of your Sunday,” the young man replied. “But suppose we make an appointment to go to the Cathedral for Vespers this afternoon, and hear Thornton and Miss Percival sing?”

“You will not hear me,” said Philip, shrugging his shoulders; “but I am unable to answer for Miss Percival.”

“I will go on the chance of hearing her,” said Constance. “You” (to the last speaker) “shall take me, so *you*” (to Bellamy) “need not feel bound to go.”

“I shall be there, nevertheless,” he said, and bowed himself out.

VI

It would have been difficult to imagine a more unimportant conversation, Philip would have said, had his opinion respecting it been asked. But this opinion would only have proved how little he, in common with many others, was able to judge of what was truly important; for this trivial conversation became the means by which the subject of the Percivals was opened to his uncle.

It was Constance who began to talk at luncheon about Miss Percival and her voice. "Philip and Jack Bellamy say that it is quite wonderful," she observed to her aunt. "I wonder we have never heard of her."

"We have not come in the way of it," Mrs. Thornton answered, composedly; but Philip observed that she gave a quick glance at her husband.

"Well, I am quite determined to come

in the way of it," continued Constance. "Philip says that she sings in the Cathedral choir, and I am going there to hear her."

"I did not know that you were so much interested in fine voices," said her aunt.

"I am just now—for a purpose," the young lady answered. "We are going to get up an operetta after Easter for—really I forget what, but some charity. So of course we want all the good voices we can find. We shall count on yours," she added, with a glance at Philip.

"Who are 'we'?" he asked.

Constance ran over half a dozen names of ladies who were conspicuous in fashionable society, and in the discussion which ensued nothing more was said of Miss Percival and her voice. Mr. Thornton, with an impassive countenance, had altogether ignored the conversation, but Philip felt that it made an opening for the suggestion he wished to offer.

Still, even with this opening, it was not

an easy task that he proposed to himself and, his heart was beating a little more quickly than usual when he followed his uncle into the library, where the latter usually retreated on Sunday afternoon. He was sitting by one of the windows in a large chair, a paper open on his knee, and a cigar in his fingers, when Philip entered. His ruddy face, with its whitening hair and beard stood out in relief against the dark back of the chair, and he looked up with a smile as his nephew entered.

"Well, Phil," he said, "have you come to join me in a quiet smoke?"

"With your permission, sir," the young man answered. "And also, if you do not object, to speak to you on a particular subject."

"By all means," said Mr. Thornton, looking interested. "What is the subject?"

Philip hesitated an instant, but he felt that it was better to make a bold plunge at once.

"Is it about—the Percivals," he answered.

If Philip has ever doubted whether the subject of the Percivals would be displeasing to his uncle, those doubts were settled by the change that came over Mr. Thornton's face as soon as he heard the name. His smile vanished instantly, his brows drew down in a frown, and there was anger as well as astonishment in the eyes that looked sharply at his nephew.

"And pray what do you know of the Percivals?" he asked.

"Very little," the young man answered, quietly. "Only that you had at one time a business connection with the head of the family, who is now dead, and that the wife and daughter whom he left are in very reduced circumstances."

"Well?" said Mr. Thornton, dryly, as he paused.

"Well," Philip went on, though his courage sank; "I thought perhaps—if you know this—you might like to—aid them."

Even if the man deserved nothing from you, these are helpless women, and I know how generous you are—”

He paused, for there was little encouragement to proceed in the hardening face before him. What a stern face it might be the young man realized at this moment for the first time. No offender looking at it but must have felt the uselessness of any appeal for mercy. Philip understood, even before the close-set lips opened, that his suggestion had been made in vain.

“It strikes me,” said Mr. Thornton, very coldly, “that, granting my generosity, I might be allowed to select the objects on whom to exercise it. If these Percivals, in whom you take a very singular interest, are in reduced circumstances, that is altogether the fault of the man who ruined himself, and very nearly ruined me, by unprincipled speculation. I am not in the least bound to aid or to provide for them.”

“Bound—no,” replied Philip; “I only thought that you might wish to do so. The

man who ruined himself did *not* ruin you," he said, involuntarily glancing around the luxurious room.

"Because I was able to take care of myself," answered Mr. Thornton. "You do not feel it necessary to support the thief who attempted to rob you of your purse because he failed in doing so? The case is parallel. Percival did not ruin me, because I looked in time after my own interest. But he jeopardized my whole fortune, and gave me so much anxiety and trouble that I never wish to hear his name mentioned."

"You must pardon me for mentioning it," said Philip. "I could not know that you regarded the matter in such a light. I only knew that the man had been associated with you once, and that he had failed in life, while you—succeeded."

The florid color left Mr. Thornton's face, and there was a sudden light of something almost like defiance in his eyes as he lifted them.

"That he failed was his own fault," he

repeated. "But I have reason to ask an explanation of your interest in these people. How is it that you have come to know them?"

"I do not know them," Philip answered. "I have only seen the daughter, and heard of their circumstances. It occurred to me that you might like to aid them, and so I spoke. Pardon me if I have taken too great a liberty."

"You have made a mistake, which I hope you are not likely to repeat," said the other, coldly. "I allow no interference in my private affairs, and suggestions are of the nature of interference. What I think best that I do, without regard to the opinions of people around me. I dealt with Percival in a manner which some meddlers condemned, but I paid not the least heed to them. What he owed me I exacted. How he fared afterwards was no concern of mine; and if his wife and daughter are destitute, they have no claim on my compassion or my purse. Now I trust that you are satis-

fied, and I must request that the subject shall not be opened again."

"I can not possibly have any desire to open it again," answered Philip, in a low tone.

He said nothing more, but, turning, walked across the room and stood for a minute or two before the fireplace, looking down at the red brands on the hearth. He was strangely unnerved by the revelation which had just been made to him,—a revelation that seemed to destroy all his former conception of his uncle, and put in its stead a hard, cruel nature, immovably set toward self-interest. Every generous impulse of the young man's soul revolted, even while he strove to subdue the feeling that overmastered him. He knew that an instinct had always warned him of this side of his uncle's character; and yet it was no less a shock when fully revealed. Speak of the Percivals again! How had he ever been so foolish as to speak of them at all, he wondered, as he gazed absently downward,

where his fancies of the morning seemed lying among the dead ashes of the fire.

Mr. Thornton glanced at him once or twice with the frown still on his face, but it was some time before he spoke. At last he asked, abruptly: "Did I understand you to say that you have no acquaintance whatever with these people?"

"Not the least," Philip answered, looking up with a start.

"You are very quixotic, then," said the other, grimly. "It is a fault of youth. But the sooner you begin to cure it the better. The man who wishes to succeed in life can not afford to indulge in sentiment of one kind or another. It will be well to remember that."

Hê opened his newspaper, and Philip left the room, with those last words echoing in his ears. They seemed a fitting close for the brief interview. And were they not a warning as well as an admonition? He felt that it was likely; and he also felt, with a force which was fairly overwhelming, that if

ever he was driven to contest with his uncle any point of that high sentiment which derives its force from conscience, he would find him as immovable as granite, and that he would have to choose between yielding, or seeming to outrage affection and gratitude by resistance.

There are people to whom neither horn of the dilemma would have been very terrible—natures which find compromise easy, or that are strong and hard enough to disregard the feelings of others. But Philip was cast in a mould that rendered him as sensitive to those feelings as to the higher claims of conscience; and he knew that should the two ever be arrayed against each other, the struggle within him would be hard, the suffering keen.

It was a relief to put away such thoughts, to hope that an issue so fraught with pain might never come to pass, and to go out into the bright afternoon with Constance, who persevered in her desire to go to the

Cathedral for Vespers. On their way she began to speak to Miss Percival.

"It seems that I made a mistake in talking of her at luncheon," she said. "Aunt Lucia told me afterwards that Uncle James does not like to hear of the family. The father acted very badly to him once. Did you know of it?"

"I have heard something of it," Philip answered. "But it is hard to learn the exact truth of old stories, and until to-day I was not any more aware than yourself that my uncle would not like to hear the name."

"And how did you find it out to-day?—did he speak to you about it?"

"Yes—or, rather, I spoke, and he—answered me. There is no doubt of his dislike to the Percivals; and, on the whole, it will be well to avoid discussing them before him in future."

"One can not easily discuss a subject of which one knows nothing," said Constance. "You forget that I never heard of them before, and all that I know now is that Miss

Percival has a voice. How much more do you know?"

"Not anything at all," Philip answered, with a laugh, which was somewhat directed against himself. For surely it *was* quixotic to have concerned himself so much about people of whom he knew so little, and with whom he had not the slightest acquaintance.

"Well, I am interested in her voice," pursued Constance. "I hope it will prove to be fine, and that she will agree to sing for us."

Philip's instinct told him that Miss Percival would not agree to do anything of the kind; but, since an instinct is not authority, he made no reply, and they presently reached the Cathedral.

As he had anticipated, and warned Constance was probable, the voice which the latter, at least, had come to hear was not heard in Vespers or Benediction. As the beautiful hymns of the latter service began, Philip found himself listening for the silver tones which he thought would have ex-

pressed so well the deep devotion of the *O Salutaris* and the *Tantum Ergo*; but he listened in vain. Miss Percival was plainly not in the choir.

They met Bellamy as they came out, and Philip resigned Miss Irving to him, pleading an engagement on his own part. It may have occurred to him, as with a sense of relief he saw them walk away together, that his sentiments were very far from being those of a lover; but he reminded himself that it was impossible he could feel any lover-like eagerness to monopolize Constance's society, when he could enjoy as much of that society every day as he liked.

Certainly the engagement by plea of which he had escaped was not a very important one. Mrs. King had told him when they parted in the morning that she had some music for him. "Come soon and get it," she had said. It seemed to him that this afternoon was a very good time to go. Accordingly he ascended the steps of a house in the neighborhood of the Cathedral,

rang the door-bell, and was ushered into a drawing-room filled—rather too much filled—with artistic furniture, and bric-à-brac that Mrs. King had collected in many quarters of the world. He made his way through it with the ease of an accustomed visitor, and found his hostess in her favorite seat near the fire. She held out her hand to him with a smile.

“You have just come in time,” she said. “I am glad to have the pleasure of presenting you to Miss Percival. Alice, my dear, this is Mr. Thornton, who paid your voice such a pretty compliment this morning that I must ask him to repeat it to you.”

Philip turned with an absolute shock of surprise toward the figure, which he had perceived without identifying it, on the other side of the fireplace. Was it possible!—yes, it was Alice Percival herself, who looked at him with her dark eyes, and bowed in acknowledgment of the introduction. If she disliked his acquaintance to be thus forced upon her, there was no sign of such

a feeling in her manner, only a courtesy that might be perhaps a little more grave than usual. For himself, Philip felt like an awkward school-boy, utterly bereft of the power of speech. He thought of Graham, and the conviction that his name was an odious sound in her ears seemed to make everything impossible except the deep bow with which he bent before her. Happily for him, Mrs. King went on:

"I tried to remember your compliment, but the words eluded me, and I think it is always a pity to spoil a well-turned phrase by quoting it clumsily. What was it exactly?"

"Not a compliment at all, if you will pardon me," answered Philip, addressing her, but including Miss Percival in his glance; "only a description which struck me when I read it, and which was forcibly recalled to my mind this morning."

He repeated the French sentence a little hurriedly, for he would have preferred an-

other opening to his acquaintance with Miss Percival.

Mrs. King nodded toward the latter. "That," she said, "is a perfect description of your singing, though it comes from a French novel. Strange how those people have the knack of expressing things!"

"If it is a correct description of my singing," replied Miss Percival—and the low, clear tones of her voice seemed to Philip like spoken music—"I think it needs improvement. '*Trop idéale pour être humaine*'—surely we must be human, in order to touch humanity."

"There are countless things to touch us on our human side," said Philip, quickly. "But to find something that enables us to forget it, even for a time, that is to help us in our battle against the evil trinity of which we have all heard."

Miss Percival looked at him, and in the gentle gravity of her glance he could not read any trace of the repugnance which he feared that she must feel for him.

"If one could do that," she answered, "it would certainly be well."

"Your voice does it," said Philip. "'*On eût dit une âme qui chantait,*' and while one listens one realizes one's own soul. There are many times, you know, when one forgets it."

The ingenuous candor of his tone made her smile. "Yes," she said, "I know that there are such times; but the forgetfulness is surely not great that can be so easily dissipated." Then she rose and turned to Mrs. King. "I am forgetting how time flies," she said; "and mamma will be looking for me."

"So I must not detain you," replied the elder lady; "but promise me that you will come on my next musical evening."

"I can not promise," Miss Percival answered; "but I will try to come, since you really wish it."

"Of course I really wish it," said Mrs. King. "And so do a great many other people."

"The other people do not matter," replied the young lady, with a gesture of indifference; "but *you* do."

She bent down as she spoke, touched her lips to Mrs. King's cheek, bowed slightly to Philip, and passed—a slender, stately figure—down the long room, and disappeared.

VII.

PHILIP felt as if he were in a dream when he quitted Mrs. King's house. It seemed to him incredible that he had really made the acquaintance of Miss Percival, and that in so simple a manner. Evidently, Mrs. King was not aware of any reason why they should not know each other. Recalling this, and Miss Percival's quiet acceptance of the introduction, he began to hope that the latter had no such feeling with regard to his uncle as he had been led to imagine.

It was astonishing how much of a weight this thought lifted from him. It not only opened a vista of possible acquaintance, which he felt would be pleasant, but, more than this, it reinstated his uncle in his respect. He said to himself that Mr. Thornton had been hard, no doubt, on the man who had nearly ruined him; but this hardness, as he had lately learned, was part of his

character; and if he had been just, no one had a right to blame him.

These reflections rendered his manner more than usually affectionate and respectful to his uncle when they met. With the impulse of a generous nature, he was eager to make amends for what might have been a harsh and mistaken judgment. But, naturally enough, Mr. Thornton misunderstood him. He thought that Philip feared to have offended him, and that the change of manner was dictated by a desire to propitiate. The error was of importance only as it led him to believe the young man to be of more easily moulded material than he was, and to imagine that his displeasure would be sufficient to influence him in any future emergency.

There did not seem much probability, however, that such an emergency would arise, for up to this time the lives of uncle and nephew had passed without any of those (sometimes unavoidable) frictions which frequently occur in the nearest relation-

ships. If there had not always been perfect sympathy, there had at least always been perfect harmony between them, and a deference on the younger man's part, which was graceful because evidently springing from affection. And since he had, in his thoughts at least, accepted the life marked out for him—a life which opened before his eyes like a vista of serene prosperity—there seemed little reason to fear any possible collisions or difficulties in the future.

Meanwhile the present was a smooth and easy path to his feet, though it was not a path which crossed that of Alice Percival soon again. He saw her in the Cathedral choir, and sometimes received a silent bow of recognition; but beyond this point their acquaintance—if it could be called an acquaintance—did not progress; for he never saw her anywhere else. She did not appear on Mrs. King's musical evening, and the ladies who were anxious to secure her voice for their operetta, failed entirely to do so. But the sound of that divine voice Sunday

after Sunday kept the thought of her in Philip's mind, mingled with other thoughts which it seemed to suggest—thoughts of higher and holier things than those that filled his life, which was apt to appear to him at such times a mere record of frivolity.

How long this singular kind of influence might have lasted it is impossible to say, for finally an accident occurred which brought the two together again. The Spring was by this time well advanced, and Philip, who had been out of the city for a few days, at the country house of a friend, was returning on an accommodation train, that stopped at all stations, when he perceived seated in front of him a lady, whom he knew, even before she turned her head, to be Miss Percival. She was alone, and he at once felt a great inclination to go to her, and perhaps take the vacant seat by her side; but a fear of seeming to presume on a very slight title to acquaintanceship, and one which had, moreover, been forced upon her, restrained him. The elation which he had felt on that

Sunday afternoon when he quitted Mrs. King's—the hope that, after all, there was no serious reason why Alice Percival should not wish to know him—had faded long before this. There had been something in the very bow with which she acknowledged his acquaintance that made it impossible to press it further.

So he kept his own seat, and contented himself with watching the nobly-outlined head, with its classic pose, and the delicate line of profile, which was now and then turned toward him as she glanced out of the window by her side. His thoughts went back to the old question of Percival *vs.* Thornton, of the severed business connection, and of the doubts which he dismissed at one time only to find them return to him at another. He was debating them afresh, when suddenly a shock that unseated every one was felt throughout the train; the car rocked violently for a moment, and seemed about to fall over on its side, but finally recovered its equilibrium, while at the same

moment the frightened passengers found their tongues and their feet. "What has happened?" every one asked of every one else; and, since no one could answer, there was an immediate rush for the door. Philip observed that Alice Percival alone quietly resumed her seat, and he stopped beside her. Danger gave him his opportunity to speak to her, though he did not think of it at this moment as an opportunity.

"Can I be of any service to you, Miss Percival?" he asked. "Will you let me assist you out of the car?"

"Mr. Thornton!" she exclaimed, looking up at him with a start; for she had not seen him before. Her face was pale, but she was perfectly self-possessed. "No — I think not," she said in answer to his question. "I will not leave the car, unless there is need to do so."

"In that case I will make some inquiries, and return as quickly as possible, in order to let you know if there is need," said Philip.

He made his way out, and soon discovered what had happened. The engine, tender, and two or three of the foremost cars had been thrown from the track by an obstacle placed upon it, whether through malice or carelessness it was impossible to say. No one was seriously injured, but several persons were severely bruised, and the damage to the train was great. Philip mastered the whole situation in a short time, and returned to Miss Percival.

"You were quite right," he said, when he had told her what had occurred, "not to yield to panic; for there is nothing worse before you than the prospect of waiting some time for a train, which will, of course, be sent out for the passengers."

"I did not suppose there was any danger after the shock was over," she answered, quietly. "And I knew I should soon learn what had happened. So we must wait here for an indefinite length of time!" She looked out of the window for an instant, and then turned back to him. "Do you

know how far we are from the city?" she asked.

"Not more than two or three miles," he replied.

"If you are sure of that," she said, rising and taking up a satchel by her side, "I shall walk in. Two or three miles will be only a pleasant walk this beautiful afternoon."

Philip's eyes brightened. "It is a very good idea," he answered, "if you are not afraid of the fatigue, and" — he hesitated — "if you will allow me to accompany you."

"Why should I do that?" she asked, regarding him with a grave but not unkindly scrutiny. "There is no reason for my troubling you so far."

"So far from troubling me, you will do me a great kindness by permitting me to accompany you," he replied, with evident sincerity. "I do not wish to remain here waiting indefinitely any more than yourself. But I should not for that reason ven-

ture to offer my companionship to you," he added, quickly. "I do not think that it would be safe for you to walk into the city alone."

"Why not?"

"You might be annoyed — or worse. If the obstruction which has thrown the train from the track was wilfully placed upon it, there may be more desperate people about than you imagine."

She sat down again — whether to remain or to reflect upon this view of the matter, Philip could not tell. She was silent for a moment before she said :

"I am not at all afraid of any annoyance."

"I can well believe that," answered Philip, seeing how brave the dark eyes were. "But lack of fear is unfortunately not a safeguard."

"Then perhaps I had better remain," she said, as if speaking to herself.

"If you prefer to go," replied the young man, with a sudden impulse of frankness,

"why should you refuse me the pleasure of attending you? I promise" — a sudden flush came over his face — "that I will not presume on being allowed to do so. If you desire it, our acquaintance shall be to-morrow exactly what it was an hour ago."

She looked at him with an expression of surprise. "And why," she said, after an instant's pause, "should you imagine that I would desire it? I do not usually ignore a service or a kindness that has been done me."

"I am sure that you do not — usually," he answered. "But I — well, if you will allow me to be candid, Miss Percival, I have been told that you would not wish to know me."

"You have been told —" she repeated. "Who had the right to tell you that?"

"It is very easy to inform you who told me," said Philip; "but whether or not he had the right to speak for you, that is another question. It was Graham. Do you remember the church fair? I saw you there

for the first time, and I asked him to introduce me. He declined, saying that he could not do so without asking your permission, and that if he had asked it, you would have — refused.”

It was now on Miss Percival's face that a slight flush appeared. “Mr. Graham is very—positive, even when he speaks for another,” she said.

“Then it was not true?” asked Philip, eagerly — “you would *not* have refused?”

She hesitated for a moment — only a moment — before answering, quietly: “If I too am to speak candidly, I must acknowledge that it is quite true; I should have refused. But not, perhaps for the reason you imagine. I have not, I hope, any feeling of enmity toward — any one; certainly not toward one who had not the least connection with past matters. But there is a fitness in all things, and I should have felt that there was no fitness in our acquaintance; hence I would have declined to know you. You see, however, that I have had no

option in the affair," she added, with a smile that in its involuntary sweetness made amends for anything in her speech which wounded him.

"It is because you have had no option," he said, "that I am bound not to presume upon an acquaintance that you would have refused me. I do not understand what you mean by saying that you would have felt that there was no fitness in it, but I understand thoroughly that I am not to have the pleasure of knowing you, as I confess that I should like to do."

She was silent again for a minute, but he was struck by the absence of any confusion or embarrassment in her manner. She seemed to reflect as she sat with downcast eyes; but when she lifted them, the same quiet self-possession and frankness looked out of their dark depths.

"If you do not understand my meaning in saying that I should have felt that there was no fitness in our acquaintance," she said,

"you must be very ignorant of the matters to which I alluded a moment ago."

"I am very ignorant," he answered. "You will, perhaps, realize how ignorant if I assure you that when I learned your name from Graham that night at the fair, I heard it for the first time, and it was not until afterwards that I learned of the former connection between your father and my uncle?"

"From whom did you learn it?" she asked, looking down again.

"From my aunt, Mrs. Thornton."

"Ah!". The exclamation seemed to escape without intention on her part, and for a moment Philip held his breath, thinking that he was to hear the other side of the story, of which he felt instinctively that there *was* another side. But no further sound issued from the lips which he watched so closely; and presently he said, timidly:

"In that story, as I have heard it, there is surely nothing to prevent our acquaintance."

"As you have heard it, probably not," she said. "And, indeed, what have *you* to do with the matter? This is not Corsica; and if it were, I do not think I should care to maintain a vendetta. What I have already said holds good — there is no fitness in our acquaintance. This is not only because your name is Thornton and my name is Percival, but because our lines in life lie far apart. But since we have met, and been made known to each other, I shall not be rude enough to disown your acquaintance; be sure of that."

Philip would have been sure of anything which she attested by such a glance as accompanied these words.

"You are very good," he murmured. "I assure you that I feel it. But, as a proof that you will not disown me, will you not reconsider your resolution, and let me walk with you into the city? I really think that you will find it better than waiting here."

"I really think that I shall," she said, rising.

VII.

"It was a strange thing to do, Alice," said Mrs. Percival.

"I suppose it seems so to you," Alice answered, in a somewhat meditative tone.

She was sitting in the twilight, by the side of the couch on which her mother spent the greater part of her life; but the flickering light of the fire, which the invalid required at almost all seasons, fell on her face, and revealed to her mother's eye its beauty and its gentle gravity. She was looking at the fire, and her lips parted slightly in a smile as she went on:

"It seems strange to *me*—now; but at the time it did not. There is something very winning about the young man: he is so frank, and apparently so unspoiled by the world. I should have preferred not to know him, but since accident has brought him

across my life, why should I be rude to him because his uncle is—what we know?”

“There is no reason for being rude,” said Mrs. Percival; “but one has a right to choose one’s acquaintances.”

“Yes,” answered her daughter, in the same meditative fashion; “one’s intimate acquaintances, of course; and I have no intention of admitting him to intimacy. But ordinary social acquaintance, that I can not refuse because his name is Thornton.”

“It is not only that his name is Thornton,” said Mrs. Percival, with some agitation, “but he is the nephew, the adopted son, of the man who has wronged us.”

“Granting that,” said Alice, laying her hand gently down on the thin fingers of the other, “I feel that we occupy so much the highest plane, that it is easy to ignore even the wrong. We have been robbed, but what is that in comparison with bearing the stain that darkens that man’s soul, and his good name, too, in the eyes of all honest people? What can be said of my father except that

he stripped himself of everything to make amends for his imprudence? But the other — all men know that he has taken and kept tenfold the amount of the debt due to him. Would you not rather — a thousand times rather—be in our position than in his? For my part, I am so glad that I am Percival instead of Thornton, that I have only pity for him, and greater pity still for the young man who, as you have said, is his adopted son, and who does not know how deeply stained is the wealth he will inherit.”

Mrs. Percival looked at her daughter with some surprise. Alice often surprised her by a way of regarding things which, to say the least, was not common. Gentle and unvindictive though the elder woman was, it required all her Christian faith and feeling to subdue the bitterness with which she thought of the wrong that had been inflicted on her daughter and herself; she could not attain to Alice's lofty point of view, yet, while it was presented to her, she acknowledged and appreciated it.

"That is all very true," she said presently; "but I can not think that it would be pleasant to have any association with a member of the family."

"Not unless it were accidental, as it has been to-day," replied Alice. "In that case I do not think that it is for *me* to shun it. I am, as I have said, in the higher position, and I should feel that it was ungenerous to make an innocent person bear the odium of a wrong in which he had no share."

"He will have the share of profiting by it," said Mrs. Percival.

"Ignorantly," answered her daughter. "The people nearest such a wrong are the last to know of it, and he knows nothing."

Mrs. Percival thought that it was a pity such ignorance should not be enlightened, but she did not express this opinion, for she also thought it likely that Alice would differ with her. So they were silent for several minutes, while the dusk deepened more and more around them, and the fitful light of the fire rose and fell, playing over the pale

countenance of the invalid lying on her pillows, and the beautiful, stately presence of the girl beside her.

Presently the latter rose and lighted a lamp, which she covered with a shade and placed on a table near her mother's couch. Then she went to an upright piano in a corner of the room, and, touching the keys softly, began to sing an evening hymn to the Blessed Virgin. The tender cadences were still filling the room when a ring at the door-bell was followed a minute later by the entrance of a visitor, who came in with the ease of a familiar *habitué*. Mrs. Percival held out her hand, but Alice finished the last strain of her hymn before she rose from the piano and greeted the new-comer with a smile.

"How do you do, Mr. Graham!" she said. "It is some time since we have seen you."

"Yes," said Graham, with a pleased look, "it is some time. I have been very busy."

"So have I," replied Alice. "What a great thing it is to be busy, so long as one is

not worked beyond the measure of one's strength! I am really sorry for the idlers of the world, who no doubt would be very much surprised by my compassion."

"I am often sorry for them myself," said Graham, "while at the same time I have not much patience with them. How much I would give for some of the golden hours they seem to desire so much to be rid of!"

"It is a pity — is it not? — that people could not dispose of their surplus time!" she said, a little absently. "I should like to purchase some, if it were possible. Poor mamma should not be left so much alone then."

"Oh! I do not mind being left alone when it can not be helped," observed Mrs. Percival. "But I confess I grew impatient and anxious this afternoon when you were so long coming."

"I knew you would be," said Alice, "and that made the delay worse to me. I was in a railroad accident," she continued, turning

to Graham. "Do you not think I have come out of it with tolerably steady nerves?"

"A railroad accident!" he repeated, looking at her with a startled air. "Are you in earnest? Where?"

"Have you not heard that there was an accident at the Junction this afternoon? A misplaced switch or an obstacle on the track — some people said one thing, some another — threw off the engine and several cars. Fortunately, the car in which I was did not leave the rails, although there was at one time imminent danger that it would."

"And you were not hurt at all?"

"No; how could I be? The shock was disagreeable, and so was the fear that other people were injured. But I believe no one was hurt seriously. There was much confusion and delay, of course, but I soon left it behind and walked into the city. It was not far, you know."

"No; only a mile or so," replied Graham. "Did the other passengers follow your example?"

"No — that is, only one accompanied me. He was a gentleman whom I met not long ago at Mrs. King's, and who is an acquaintance of yours, I believe — Mr. Thornton."

She lifted her eyes to Graham's face as she spoke, so she had the advantage of seeing all the astonishment which his countenance betrayed when she uttered the last name which he expected to hear. He looked at her for a moment, as if he could scarcely believe his ears; but her quietness seemed to make belief necessary, so he finally answered:

"Yes, I know a man of the name — Philip Thornton. We were at college together, else I should hardly be likely to know him; for he is a butterfly of fashion — one of the idlers of whom we spoke a few minutes ago — while I am a hard-working grub, as you are aware."

"He gives me the impression of being rather a pleasant person," she said, as quietly as she had spoken before.

Graham flushed suddenly. "If I could have imagined that you would find him so,"

he said, "I might have acceded to a request which he made me some time ago, to introduce him to you. But I could not present him without asking your permission, and I felt sure that you would have refused it."

"You were quite right," she answered. "I told him so this afternoon, when he spoke of the matter. I should have declined to know him, if the opportunity to decline had been given me; but it was not. He came into Mrs. King's one day when I was there, and she presented him, as a matter of course. He has never presumed on the introduction in the least. Although I see him every Sunday in the choir, we have not exchanged a word since our first meeting until this afternoon, when he very kindly offered to render me any assistance that I needed."

Graham's somewhat sardonic lip curled a little. To himself he said: "It was just the opportunity he wanted!" But he did not say this to Miss Percival. Instead he observed, carelessly:

"That is very like him. He is pleasant,

as you have said, and is inclined to be chivalric where women are concerned. It is a pity that he has little depth of character or purpose — or, perhaps, I should say that it *would* be a pity if life had not been made so smooth to his feet. But as it is, he has no need of more than he possesses.”

“I must disagree with you,” said Miss Percival. “I do not think that life can possibly be made so smooth to any one’s feet that there would not be need of depth in character and purpose. But why should you think that he does not possess any?”

Graham shrugged his shoulders. “Simply from my observation of him. He is one of those characters who float with the current, but have no strength to go against it. At present he is a Catholic, after a fashion; but some day the world will offer him an inducement, and he will give up his religion, as his uncle has done.”

“Will he?” said Alice, as if to herself. She did not contradict Graham’s opinion — what basis of knowledge had she on which

to do so? — but Philip's face rose before her mental vision, and she thought that it indicated something better than the moral weakness of which the other accused him.

"I have just been telling Alice that I do not consider the young man a very — desirable acquaintance," said Mrs. Percival's soft, hesitating tones.

Graham glanced keenly at Alice. "It surprises me a little," he remarked, "that Miss Percival should desire him as an acquaintance."

Miss Percival met his glance as calmly as ever. "Have you understood me so little as to imagine that I desire his acquaintance?" she asked. "But I will not be so unjust, or seem so vindictive, as to visit on him the fault of another person. I can not regard him as outside the pale of that courtesy which one owes to everybody, though I have not the least intention of showing him anything more than courtesy. And now I think that we have surely exhausted the subject."

"I am not responsible for it," observed

Graham, dryly; "but I agree with you that it is exhausted. Mrs. Percival," he added, turning to that lady, "I am forgetting all this time that I have brought you something — a mere trifle in itself, but which I hope will add to your comfort."

He rose, went out into the hall, and returned in a moment with one of the book-rests which are made to be placed in front of an invalid, and support a volume that may be too heavy for the hand. It was a very happy diversion. Mrs. Percival was charmed, Alice was grateful for the kind thought of her mother, and Graham was pleased by the cordial acceptance of his gift.

"I saw it in a shop-window to-day, and thought of you at once," he said. "I know that you are so much alone, and that reading is your chief pleasure, while I am sure that holding a book must be very fatiguing to you."

"Oh! yes; it is often so fatiguing that I am forced to put down the volume at a point

where I most wish to go on," she said. "This will be delightful."

"I wonder that *I* never thought of it," remarked Alice, in a tone of self-reproach.

"I am glad that you left it for me to think of," said Graham.

He spent a pleasant hour with them after this, and Alice sang his favorite songs for him before he went away. But no sooner was he outside their door than a cloud fell over his face. He would certainly have said that no fear of Philip Thornton's possible power to attract, but only a sense of what was fit and proper, had made him refuse to present him to Miss Percival. Yet it was with keen regret that he heard how the young man had carried his point—for it was in this light that he regarded the affair,—and been admitted to her acquaintance. He knew how winning Philip was, how gracious in nature as well as in manner, and he overrated the possible effect of these qualities, as a man who does not possess them is very likely to do.

The strong and hard nature may feel something of scorn for the lighter and sunnier one, yet this scorn is often mingled deeply with envy, since the man who possesses the first knows that many things are beyond his reach which the charm of the latter can win. And, beside this instinctive fear, Graham was startled by Alice Percival's attitude. He was not able to realize or fully grasp the sincerity with which she felt that it was beneath her, in dignity as well as in justice, to visit upon the nephew the fault of the uncle. For once he failed to understand the nature which he had reason to know well, and gave a lower reading to her conduct than it deserved.

The reason for this was not far to seek. He was himself so deeply attached to her, that the jealousy which usually accompanies strong passion was ready to be stirred by a shadow. He did not imagine for a moment that Philip would be seriously his rival, for he knew that there were influences of the present as powerful as those of the past to

forbid this; but he felt that he might suffer by comparison with a "butterfly of fashion," as he had contemptuously called him, and that the gracious charm which he had himself often acknowledged might cause Alice Percival to turn from a nature formed in so different a mould.

As the young man walked on, revolving these thoughts, with his dark brows knitted and his face set in heavy lines, did no spirit suggest to him, in the words of Holy Writ, that out of the heart are "the issues of life," and that it was a dangerous passion which had entered to possess his? He had not hesitated to prophesy that Philip would lightly resign his faith for some worldly inducement: was there no reason to fear that he might himself forget its strongest precepts under the influence of the feelings that now overpowered him?

VII.

THE stars in their courses seemed to fight for Philip, so far as his acquaintance with Miss Percival was concerned. The next Sunday after the railroad accident, a sudden heavy shower at the end of mass detained a large part of the cathedral congregation, who were totally unprepared for it. Among the rest, the choir came down from their gallery to the stone portico on the side of the church, which was their place of exit, and, confronting the white sheets of rain, paused. A few donned gossamers, opened umbrellas, and went away; others retired to the church, to wait until the shower should be over; but a small group lingered on the portico, and among these was Miss Percival. Philip, in the shade of the doorway, watched her for a few minutes unobserved. She was standing alone, regarding the rain with evident concern, and in the noise which it made did not

hear his step as he approached, until he spoke to her. Then she turned with a start.

"Oh, Mr. Thornton!" she said. "So you are detained, too?"

"Yes," he answered. "I have not even an umbrella to offer you, and I see that you are anxious to get away."

"My mother is not as well as usual to-day, and I dislike to leave her longer than I can possibly avoid," she said; "that is why I am anxious. If I had only brought a waterproof! But who could have suspected such a sky as one came to church under!"

"This will not last long; it is too sudden and too violent," said Philip. "I am sure that in half an hour it will be fair again. Meanwhile let me hope that you felt no ill effects from your walk on Tuesday?"

"None at all. Why should I? It was not much of a walk."

"Some ladies would have thought it a good deal of a walk, especially preceded by such a nervous shock. Our escape was really remarkable. I do not understand yet

why our car did not go over as well as the others."

"It was something for which to be very grateful that it did not."

"Yes; for we should have been badly bruised, at least." He paused a moment, then added, with some hesitation: "I wanted to inquire the next day how you were; it seemed very strange not to do so, but I feared to presume on the acquaintance you had permitted me."

"There was no need," she said, a little hastily. "I was as well as possible the next day. My nerves never trouble me. I thanked God for my preservation, and after that thought no more of the matter."

A brief silence followed this remark; then:

"You thanked God!" said Philip. "Of course that was a duty. Would you believe that I never thought of it?"

The frankness of his tone almost provoked her to smile as she looked at him. "I fear that you can not think much of what you owe to Him," she said.

"I fear that I do not," he answered. "You remember what I told you once before — that there were times when I forgot that I had a soul? You see now how true it is. It is terribly easy to forget!" he added, with a slight sigh.

"I suppose it is — for some people," she answered, thinking of Graham's remarks about this candid self-accuser. No depth of character or purpose: surely such words as these seemed to substantiate the charge.

"Yes, for some people," Philip echoed. "I know that it is not so with other people — with strong, earnest, spiritual natures. But, unhappily, I have no such nature. I am easily influenced, and worldly to the ends of my fingers. I can only say one thing for myself: that sometimes my soul wakes up, and is conscious of higher things — feels them for a time keenly and intensely, but it very soon and very easily goes to sleep again. Does that mean that there is hope for me, or does it not, Miss Percival!"

"Hope of what, Mr. Thornton?" asked

Miss Percival, interested in these revelations, yet conscious that they were strange.

"Of my ever being any more alive to spiritual influences than I am; of my soul waking up for good, and dominating my life?"

Alice remembered afterward that her proper reply would have been that she really did not know him well enough to be able to answer such a question, but at the moment she did not think of this mode of evasion. He looked at her with a serious inquiry in his eyes, and she felt constrained to reply, to the best of her ability, to the question propounded.

"Since you can feel spiritual things keenly and intensely," she answered, "I should say that there was hope of your becoming more alive to their influence, especially if—but this is really too personal!"

"No, no!" said Philip, eagerly. "Pray go on."

"Well, then, I was going to say if you were less prosperous. Of course prosperity strengthens the influence of the world."

"Everyone says so," he replied doubtfully ; "but my experience is that there are quite as many worldly people in adversity as in prosperity. It must be just as bad for the spiritual life to desire riches as to possess them."

"Worse, perhaps, since envy may be mingled with the desire. But the worldliness of people in adversity does not lessen the danger of those in prosperity. Shall I remind you of the camel and the eye of a needle ?"

"No, don't ; for I shall be a rich man some day, I suppose."

"Then there is the more reason that you should be reminded of it ; for it was a warning, not a denunciation. I often think of the sad gentleness with which Our Lord looked after the young man, whose great possessions made him turn away, and said : 'A rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

"It was a terrible saying — to come from the lips of God Himself," remarked

Philip, gravely. "Some day I shall meditate on it, and go on and become a Trappist."

"No doubt it is easier to resign riches than to employ them wisely," said Alice. "Yet it is a great thing to be the steward of the gifts of God."

It did not occur to her any more than it did to him to think at this moment how it would be with riches that had been unjustly gained. She had herself received a great gift from God in the possession of a nature that never dwelt upon the sense of wrong. The Thornton wealth was nothing to her save, perhaps, matter for compassion : for she knew the stain upon it, and felt herself far richer with empty hands.

At this point of the conversation both perceived that the rain was diminishing in violence, and while they were speaking of it, Mr. Richter, the director of the choir, came up to them.

"I am glad to see you two together," he said ; "for I want to suggest that I think it would be well if you practised your duets

a little outside of the choir. They do not go quite smoothly, and it is *your* fault" (turning to Philip), "for Miss Percival is always exact to the faintest shade of tone and time."

"Of course it is my fault," answered Philip, looking at Alice with something like a flash of pleasure in his eyes. "Miss Percival is an admirable musician. I shall be only too delighted to practise with her—if she will allow me."

Miss Percival hesitated, and for the first time since he had known her, colored with embarrassment. "The difficulty is," she said at length, "that I am so closely engaged—I have so little time to spare—"

"You have your evenings," replied Mr. Richter. "Mr. Thornton can go to your house, and a little practice will give him all that he needs."

"Unfortunately my evenings also are very much occupied with my mother," she said looking down, and feeling that she seemed ungracious; but how was it possible to in-

introduce Philip Thornton into her mother's presence ? "I really fear—I do not see how it can be managed."

Mr. Richter, surprised, full of musical zeal, and utterly devoid of social tact, was about to remonstrate, but Philip interposed quickly :

"I am very sorry, but if it would inconvenience you in the least, pray do not think of it. I could not be guilty of trespassing upon your time. I will find a music-master, and I will instruct him to improve my tone and time. Perhaps that will have the desired result."

Alice looked at him gratefully. She could not help the glance, so much was she pleased by his manner as well as by his words. There was not the faintest trace of offended feeling in either, only perfect courtesy, and an apparently eager desire to spare her any annoyance.

"You are very considerate, Mr. Thornton," she said with the dark eyes still resting on him. "At present I do not see how

it would be possible for me to practise with you ; but if any arrangement can be made, I will let you know."

Philip bowed his thanks. "It is you who are kind," he said. "I only beg that you will not make any arrangement that could possibly prove inconvenient to you."

"Oh, inconvenient !— why should it be inconvenient ?" exclaimed obstinate Mr. Richter. "It is an affair of half an hour. And you should practice together—you really should !"

"The rain has ceased, I believe," said Miss Percival, hastily ; and giving no time for further words, she hurried away, while Philip, watching her, asked himself why he should be debarred from attending her, and why she was so manifestly reluctant to receive him into her house.

These were questions more easily asked than answered, however,— at least by him. He felt that he could not presume on such acquaintance as Miss Percival permitted him, and yet the restrictions on their inter-

course began to fret him greatly. This was not only because whatever is surrounded by difficulty becomes in equal measure attractive to human nature in general, especially to masculine human nature. There were qualities in Alice Percival that would have taken his interest captive under whatever circumstances he had met her ; and had those circumstances been favorable to their intercourse, this judgment might have deepened even more surely and rapidly than it did. For, to any one with sufficient elevation of character and fineness of perception to appreciate her, she was charming as only the noblest women are charming. And Philip, whatever else he lacked, was not deficient in fineness of perception. He *felt*, if he did not yet *know*, all that she was, and he never saw her without wishing to see her more frequently and with more freedom. "If I could be with her oftener I really believe that I should become a different man," he thought ; and then he sighed, for there seemed no prospect of

compassing such association as that which he desired.

Nevertheless, he was rewarded more quickly than he anticipated for his self-command on that Sunday morning. Hardly a week later he received one day a note from Mrs. King, bidding him come to her house that evening, and when he went he found Alice Percival there. That the arrangement was no plan of hers, however, he quickly learned. Mrs. King met him with a laugh.

"Mr. Richter came to me," she said, "with a complaint of two indolent people who would not practise together, so I promised him that the practising should be done, and that under my own eye. Therefore I have inveigled you both here, and now practise you must and shall."

Philip looked at Miss Percival with a deprecating air. "It is all on account of my mistakes," he said, "that you have this trouble. I am very sorry."

"I am not sure that it is altogether on account of your mistakes," she answered,

with a smile ; "but if it were it would really be no trouble. You don't know how I like to sing."

"And your voices accord so well," said Mrs. King, "that I promise myself great pleasure in listening."

She settled herself by the fire while the two young people went to the grand piano which occupied the end of her large drawing-room. And then followed an hour of pleasure as great as Philip had ever known in his life. To hear Alice Percival's noble voice rise in the great harmonies which suited it so well, to let his own voice blend with it until they flowed together like two united streams—this in itself was delightful. But in such practising there is always much beside singing ; there is the interchange of opinion and criticism, the common interest, and the sense of growing intimacy. All of this Philip enjoyed, even while he felt that it was something which slipped through his fingers and left no tangible result behind. He would be no nearer to Alice Per-

cival for this hour of association ; he had an instinct of that.

And indeed the hour had hardly ended when an interruption came. They were still at the piano, and Philip was saying, "If it does not tire you, let us try that once more," when the door suddenly opened, and a servant ushered in Graham. The eyes of the latter at once fell on the two so familiarly together at the instrument, and he knew that all his fears were realized. Philip had made good his position with Alice. "What will not a woman overlook for the sake of a handsome face and winning manner !" he thought bitterly ; and he would hereafter be contrasted with a man whom he knew to be far his superior in social grace. His countenance darkened so much that Mrs. King, looking up, and comprehending the state of the case at once, felt it necessary to smooth matters by an explanation.

"Sit down, Mr. Graham," she said, "and enjoy the music with me for a few minutes.

It will not last more than a few minutes longer, for it is merely an affair of practise. Mr. Richter came to me and complained that he could not induce these two to practise together, so I laid a trap, drew them both here, and set them to work whether they would or no."

"Indeed!" said Graham. He glanced at the two faces at the piano. "They do not look as if you had exercised any very disagreeable compulsion," he observed.

"Oh! they both like music," returned Mrs. King; "and after they get to work they are interested, of course. The trouble was, by Mr. Richter's account, to get them together."

"Miss Percival did not care to receive Thornton at her house, I presume," said Graham, dryly.

"Yes, that was it," answered Mrs. King, glancing at him. "But why do you speak so significantly? Why should she not receive him at her house."

"Well, for one or two very weighty rea-

sons, which do not, however, seem to weigh very much with her when it comes to a question of intercourse elsewhere," replied Graham, sarcastically.

"You are talking in riddles," said Mrs. King. "What kind of weighty reasons do you mean? I insist upon knowing, for I introduced Mr. Thornton to her."

"Oh! the reasons are not personal to *him*," continued Graham. "He is well enough, as far as he goes. They have to do with another generation. Have you never heard that Mr. Percival and Mr. Thornton were partners once, and that while one was ruined, the other is now the richest man in Riverport?"

"No, never, How did it happen?"

The young man shrugged his shoulders. "Thereby hangs the tale, a tale which is only dimly understood by the public, that condones anything in a man who succeeds. But a good many things come to a lawyer's ears, and I by chance have heard the particulars from a good authority. It was a

plain case of robbery, and from that robbery James Thornton's fortune dates."

"How dreadful!" said Mrs. King, with a startled glance toward the two at the piano. "Does *she* know?"

"Yes," answered Graham, gloomly.

"And does *he* know?"

"I think not, no I am sure he does not. But," the speaker added, grimly, "he *shall* know before he is very much older."

IX.

"Mr dear," said Mr. Thornton one day to his wife, "you know more than I do about such matters, but I can not say I like the way things are going on between Constance and Philip."

Mrs. Thornton looked at her husband with rather a curious glance. She did not herself think that things were "going on" at all between Constance and Philip, but she did not care to say as much. After an instant she asked, evasively : "What do you mean ?"

"I should think you would see what I mean !" replied Mr. Thornton, a little impatiently. "Do they have anything to do with each other — have they advanced one step toward arranging the matter for which we are both anxious ? As far as my observation extends, Constance has that fellow Bellamy constantly dangling about her ;

and Philip — I don't know what Philip does with himself, but he certainly does not devote his time or his attention to *her*."

"No, he certainly does not," said Mrs. Thornton, coldly. "And therefore you can not blame Constance for letting Jack Bellamy or any one else enjoy her society. You surely do not expect her to devote her attention to Philip when he gives no sign of desiring it?"

Pride of sex and pride of family both lifted the lady's head as she asked this question, and lit a spark in her eyes, which her husband understood.

"Well — no," he answered, after a slight hesitation; "of course one could not expect that. But we shall have her wanting to marry Bellamy or some other fellow if affairs go on as they are at present. Something must be done. I must speak to Philip."

He looked at his wife as he uttered the last words, as if half-expecting her to dissuade him, as she had done some months be-

fore. But Mrs. Thornton, who really wished for the match, realized now that "speaking to Philip" was a necessity. As time went on it had become more and more apparent to her that, so far as Philip was concerned, Constance might marry Bellamy or any one else. She had looked for him to come forward of himself, but he had not come forward. He was either the most confident or the most indifferent of suitors — if that term could possibly be applied to a man who had never even begun to offer suit.

Sometimes Mrs. Thornton's pride rose in arms when she looked at Constance, in all her delicate beauty, and thought how differently she should be wooed; and when she saw other men burning incense at her shrine, and contrasted their devotion with Philip's indifference, her heart grew wroth against the latter. But this feeling did not generally last very long. She reminded herself that his intercourse with Constance was so much more that of a brother than of a lover, that he could not be expected to

display the ardor of devotion which other men exhibited. Nevertheless, the fact that he had formidable rivals must, she thought, force itself upon his apprehension ; yet it seemed to lend no energy to his proceedings. Did he think that Constance was securely his whenever he chose to throw the handkerchief ? Mrs. Thornton hardly dared asked herself what Constance thought, but she knew well that if matters remained unchanged much longer, Constance might give her heart to some other man, and all hope would be over of the match which her husband and herself so much desired.

It was plainly necessary, therefore, that Philip should be spoken to, and she was glad that Mr. Thornton announced his intention of doing so. She had perceived the necessity for some time, but it was not for *her* to take the initiative. When he looked at her, consequently, as if asking her opinion, she said :

“ Yes, it really seems necessary. He either does not share your wishes, or he

is strangely ignorant of the fact that no woman, especially a woman so much admired as Constance, will tolerate indifference. I could not blame her if she announced any day that she had accepted another man."

"But *I* should blame her!" cried Mr. Thornton, growing red at the bare suggestion. "She ought to know — she ought to understand. As for Philip, he shall hear some very plain words from me."

"Take care!" said his wife warningly. "Remember that you have never distinctly expressed your desire to him, therefore you have no right to call him to account. Speak to him kindly, put the matter in an amiable light, and I am sure he will at once consent to gratify you."

"I have no doubt of that," said Mr. Thornton, significantly. "A pretty case it would be if he did not consent. A beautiful wife and a fortune are not things that are offered to a man every day."

It was on the next day that these two

very desirable things were offered to Philip. It chanced to be Sunday again, and when Mr. Thornton following his usual custom, retired to the library after luncheon, he summoned his nephew to accompany him. Philip, a little surprised, but nowise loath, complied. As he entered the room, however, some malign influence brought to his mind the other occasion when he had been there with his uncle — when he had rashly introduced the subject of the Percivals, and made an appeal which proved fruitless. The recollection of his disappointment came back to him with force, although he knew now that no other result of such an appeal had been possible. He stood by the hearth, looking down as he had done before, and thinking of Alice Percival, when Mr. Thornton's voice suddenly roused him.

“I have something of importance to say to you, Philip,” he observed ; “but I do not think it is likely to be a surprise to you.”

Philip looked up. His head was so full of the Percivals that he absolutely fancied

his uncle might be about to speak of them. "I can not assure you on that point until I know what it is," he answered, with a quick gleam of interest in his eyes.

Mr. Thornton, who had seated himself in a large chair by the library table, regarded him for a moment without speaking further. He was proud of the young man ; his looks and bearing, his social success and fine manners, all pleased him, and he felt a keen sense of gratification in thinking what a bright destiny he was about to unfold to him. It did not occur to him to regard Philip as in any respect an independent human being. He was so connected in his mind with his own prosperity, as the person who would exhibit and adorn it, that he was unable to conceive him in any other relation or position. When he went on speaking, it was in a tone which seemed to take everything for granted.

' You must be aware,' he said, "that I wish you to marry Constance. Your aunt and myself long ago set our hearts on the

match ; and if I have not spoken to you on the subject before, it was because she was quite certain it would arrange itself. But, in my opinion, there is nothing like making things sure, and therefore I want you to understand that it is time the thing was settled. Constance has too many men in her train for delay to be safe, and you — why should you wait ?”

“Why should I wait?” repeated Philip, blankly. He was so much surprised that for a minute he could hardly collect his thoughts. Of course he had known his uncle’s wishes — that was true enough — but of late they had passed out of his recollection altogether. Brought thus abruptly face to face with them now, he was unable to grasp a single consideration bearing upon them.

“Yes,” said Mr. Thornton, “why should you wait? You are old enough to marry. You do not mean”—frowning quickly—“that you have any objection to the plan?”

“I hardly know what I mean,” Philip

replied, truthfully, "I have never thought seriously of the matter, and I am very sure that Constance has not either."

"Then it is time for you both to begin to think seriously of it," said Mr. Thornton; "that is why I have spoken. A thing so important can not be dealt with in this haphazard fashion. Of course, the first step must come from you. You must offer yourself to Constance. A woman expects so much you know."

"Well—yes," said Philip, who thought it a reasonable expectation. Then he paused and looked down again. To accept a marriage with Constance as a distant possibility in his thoughts, and to have it thus immediately pressed upon him, were, he found, two very different things. He was astonished by the reluctance which suddenly seemed to take possession of him. He felt like a man who is dragged to the brink of the precipice, and whose impulse is to draw back with all his strength. Mr. Thornton, watch-

ing him, divined his reluctance, and felt his anger rising.

"Will you kindly tell me what is the meaning of this?" he asked, in a tone of ominous coldness. "Why are you so slow to give me the assurance that you will fulfil my wishes and offer yourself to Constance?"

"Because," said Philip, lifting his head, "it strikes me that it is a matter which concerns me so much more than any one else—except Constance—that I am bound to give a little time for reflection before taking such a step."

Mr. Thornton's face grew dark. Opposition always angered him, but opposition from Philip, and on this point, was something he had so little counted on that it seemed to him intolerable. However, he remembered his wife's counsel, and with an effort controlled himself—or at least he controlled the outward expression of his inward irritation.

"And pray," he said, sarcastically, "what

do you want to reflect upon? Is not Constance the most admired girl in Riverport, — a girl whom any man might be proud to win, — a girl to do you credit to the end of her life? And do you not understand that I wish this marriage in order that I may leave my fortune undivided, and so secure to you a future as prosperous as a man could desire?”

“Yes,” said Philip, “I understand, and thank you deeply. It is like the rest of your kindness to me. As for Constance, she is all that you have said. But, my dear uncle, marriage is a very serious affair, and if one enters into it in haste, one may, you know, repent at leisure.”

“What point has that stale saying in this connection?” demanded Mr. Thornton, with stern impatience, “What haste has there been? Am I not speaking to you now on account of your delay? You have known Constance for years, you have been closely associated with her for months: what more can you desire?”

Philip felt that there might be much more to desire, but he was rather at a loss how to say so. He lifted his eyes, and by chance they fell on one of the few religious pictures in the house—a fine engraving of the *Madonna di San Sisto*. He looked at it for a moment, while a multitude of thoughts came into his mind; then he turned and looked at his uncle.

“You forget one thing,” he said. “Constance and I are not of the same religion.”

Mr. Thornton stared. He knew that his nephew had returned his faith, but he had supposed that it sat very lightly on him, and such an objection as this was the last that he could have anticipated.

“And what has that to do with it?” he asked after a moment.

“A great deal, in my opinion,” Philip answered. “I am not a very good Catholic, but I hold the truths of the faith, and I should like my wife to hold them also. It seems to me that there could be small assurance of harmony in a household where there was

not sympathy on the most important subject connected with human life."

"Has there not been harmony in this household?" asked the elder man, rather hotly. "Yet your aunt is a Protestant, and I—"

He paused, and despite himself, changed countenance with the consciousness that he had gone too far. What, indeed, was he?

"Do you," said Philip, quietly, "consider yourself a Catholic?"

"I was a Catholic when I married," he replied; "and if I have since given up the Church, it has been for no reason connected with my marriage. When two people are sensible, their disagreeing in opinion on such a subject does not matter in the least."

"That depends very much on the way one looks at it," said the young man. "I think it would matter exceedingly to me."

"Then you are a fool!" said Mr. Thornton, losing control of himself in the intensity of his irritation. "If you persist in

shackling yourself with a faith which is a bar to your worldly success in every way, you should be glad to conciliate public opinion by marrying a Protestant — a girl whose family connections are irreproachable and calculated to do you great service in the future. Let me hear no more of such folly. If this is your only objection, it is not worthy of a moment's consideration. Understand that my mind is made up on the subject of this marriage. Either it must take place, or my intentions toward you will be greatly changed."

"I should have preferred that you had left that unsaid," replied Philip, who now looked a little pale, as if the strain of the interview was telling on him. "What I would not do for the sake of gratifying you, who have done so much for me, I should certainly not do through the fear of any change in your intentions toward me. With regard to the proposed marriage, I divined your wishes long before this, and accepted them without consideration, thinking that

in time Constance and myself might make a match. But to think of a thing as vaguely possible in the future is very different from having it held before one as an immediate necessity. You must forgive me if I can not give you at once the assurance that you ask. In that which is so important—that which concerns my whole life—I must take a little time for reflection.”

“How much time?” asked Mr. Thornton, bruskiy.

“A few days would answer, I suppose,” said Philip, reluctantly.

“Very well, then,” returned the other; “in a few days—in a week at farthest—I shall expect to hear your decision. The delay seems to me absolutely useless. A girl might be guilty of such absurdity as not to know her mind at the last moment, but a man— However, I will consent to this delay on the ground that it is the last.”

X.

PHILIP left his uncle's presence with a mind more disturbed than he would have believed possible had the fact been told him a few months before. *Then* he would have accepted the fate prepared for him with entire resignation, *now* he was filled with a sense of regret which surprised himself. What had changed him so greatly in so short a time? He debated this question mentally as he left the house and did not find the solution of it altogether easy. Something had wakened within him — mind, heart, conscience, which was it? — and roused him to a sense of the great possibilities that lay in life. As the trumpet call rouses a sleeping soldier to battle, so in the depths of his nature a trumpet had been sounded which had roused him to think of something more than frivolous pleasures or the amassing and the enjoyment of wealth.

He scarcely knew what influence had done this — more than one influence, perhaps, had united in doing it,—but the fact and the result were not to be ignored. For the first time he felt impatient of the fetters that bound his life: he longed for more freedom and a wider field. Yet, quite apart from any consideration of self-interest, he was reluctant to disregard his uncle's claims upon him. Selfishness often cloaks itself behind independence of spirit, but an unselfish nature can not, even for the sake of independence, wound those who have deserved submission and respect. So long as his uncle's demands were within legitimate bounds, Philip felt that he could not fail to yield to them. But was it a legitimate demand that he should marry Constance? This was the question he had now to answer.

He had left the house without considering where he was going, but involuntarily his steps followed a familiar road, and before long he found himself in the wake of a stream of people who were entering the

Cathedral for Vespers. The roll of the great organ filled the building, and the choir were chanting the Psalms as he entered. The noble, familiar strains seemed to calm and strengthen his spirit. Impressionable to all influences, he now felt that every influence around him was sustaining and inspiring. If it were necessary to make a decision which would affect his whole life, here surely was the best place to make it. And was it a recollection of the impulse that had come to him at the sight of the San Sisto Madonna that led his feet toward the altar of the Blessed Virgin ? One of the many tender names which the love and reverence of the faithful have bestowed upon her came into his mind as he looked at the figure, standing throned upon the earth which her Son had redeemed — Mother of Good Counsel. So she was called ; and he, who felt so strongly the need of counsel, knelt, and by that gracious name invoked her powerful aid.

Owing to the fashion of pews that pre-

vails in American churches — an odious fashion surely, as are all fashions borrowed from Protestantism—one does not see those devotional groups kneeling at different shrines and chapels while the great central worship goes on, which are so charming to the eye and spirit in the great churches of Catholic Europe. Philip, therefore — who had no desire to make himself remarkable in the face of a congregation of people seated decorously in their pews, while the Vespers were sung over their heads — also entered one of the boxes, which, with their closed, proprietary air, are so foreign to the spirit of Catholicity, and so expressive of the system from which they sprang.

He had knelt for some time with his head bowed in his hands, when a stir, the sound of rustling silk, and the opening of a pew-door in front of him, made him involuntarily look up. The sexton was ushering a lady and gentleman to a seat, and a glance showed him that they were Constance and Bellamy. Their appearance did not sur-

prise him, for he knew how often, together with other Protestants, they came to the Cathedral "to hear the music," which of late had become well worth hearing; but he felt strangely moved to see before him at this moment the woman who was uppermost in his thoughts. And she was seated only a few feet from the shrine of Mary! Would she lift her eyes in reverence at least, to the image of her in whom womanhood was forever exalted,—her who had been found worthy to clothe with the robe of humanity the Son of God?

With a kind of fascination he watched for a sign of this reverence, but watched in vain. Constance was too finely bred to be guilty of such outward rudeness as many Protestants permit themselves in a Catholic church; but Philip, who was familiar with all the expressions of her face, read accurately enough the meaning of the glance that roved critically over the altar, and the figure above it—resting on the last for a

moment with cold scrutiny—and then turned away.

Here was a woman who in all her life had never echoed the Angelic Salutation, — had never cried to the Mother of God, “Hail Mary!” and would certainly never teach those holy words to infant lips. It was easy to forget this when one saw her in the world, young, lovely and charming, — when she was the belle of the ball-room, the centre of admiration; but *here*, in the house of God, where she sat unmoved before the altar, or glanced with the instinctive aversion of Protestantism at the image of the Mother of God, it was impossible to forget it.

Considering the atmosphere in which he lived, it was hardly strange that Philip had never given a thought to the difference of religion between Constance and himself, until it had suddenly flashed upon him as a ground for objection in the interview with his uncle. But, once awakened to the thought, he realized more and more all that

it meant. If he married this woman, she could only touch the surface of his life ; for what deep feeling or deep thought had he which was not influenced by the religion that she had been taught to reject ?

One often wonders that this consideration does not weigh more strongly with those who are meditating a mixed marriage. Where lives are narrowly bounded by material and domestic interests, there is, of course, some common ground on which to meet, though all the evils of religious difference remain. But with those who live in the broader world of thought, where is there any common ground ? Human conduct, human history, human life in all its aspects,—the innumerable questions in politics, in science, nay even in art, which agitate the world, have for the Catholic relations to certain great, immutable truths which the non-Catholic denies or ignores. There is no hope of agreement; for the basis on which opinion rests is radically different. What Catholic has not felt this where some

Protestant friend or relative is concerned, and has not been taught that there is hardly a fact of history or a subject of contemporary thought which it is possible for them to view in the same light? And yet there are Catholics who will introduce the same dissonance, the same hopeless lack of sympathy, into the closest relation of human life,—a relation so close that only perfect sympathy can render it endurable to one who thinks or feels.

These reflections crowded upon Philip as he looked from the star-crowned statue of Mary to the fashionable figure seated before it. He had learned of late, for the first time since his childhood, what Catholic womanhood might be, and he knew now the difference between its charm and that which was the result of natural amiability and worldly grace. "It is impossible!" he thought; "I can not run the risk of such a marriage,—a risk for others as well as for myself. If Constance will become a Cath-

olic, I will comply with my uncle's wishes ; but otherwise I can not."

He said this to himself, in a kind of despair — torn between the wish to requite his uncle's great kindness by gratifying what he knew to be his strongest desire, and by his reluctance to bind his life in the manner demanded. He sternly ignored in this struggle certain feelings which drew his heart in another direction. He felt that he was, in a degree, bound to Constance, and he knew that any suit of his to Alice Percival would be utterly hopeless. He tried, therefore, to drive away the image of the latter whenever it presented itself.

But now the Vespers had ended; the priest with his train approached the altar, the congregation sank on their knees, the door of the tabernacle swung open, and, hark ! from the choir-loft came a voice like that of an angel leading the worship of heavenly choirs. "*O salutaris Hostia !*" it sang, lifting up on its silver notes, full of the spirit of faith and adoration, the hearts of all below. "*O*

salutaris Hostia !" Philip echoed in the depths of his own, as he raised his glance to the throned monstrance. In withdrawing, it fell on Constance. She had not stirred, but still sat careless and erect in her seat, only turning her head toward the gallery from which came the tones that seemed giving utterance to the worship of all the kneeling throng. "Do they say nothing to her?" Philip thought, with a sense of wonder; but when he saw her give a glance and a slight nod of approbation to Bellamy, he knew that they had said no more to her than the *aria* of a singer in an opera.

XI.

A few days later Philip decided to put his fate to the touch, so far as Constance was concerned. He felt that he must know before speaking to his uncle again what his answer was to be, and he could not know that before he had sounded Constance. If she were willing even to entertain the thought of becoming a Catholic, it would be enough for the present ; for surely, he considered, there need to be no haste about their marriage. Opportunities to speak to her were not lacking, and he took advantage of an occasion when they were together one day in Mrs. Thornton's private sitting-room—a charming apartment, to which only her most intimate friends were ever admitted.

It was in the morning, and Philip had entered the room, to find the young girl sitting by one of the windows, intent on an

elaborate piece of artistic needlework. Her graceful figure and fair head outlined against the light, her fingers busy with the rich-hued silks, made a pretty picture — so pretty that he wondered a little that it left him so cold. They exchanged a few words on indifferent subjects, and then he remained silent so long that she glanced up at him interrogatively. He answered the glance by drawing nearer and sitting down before her.

“Constance,” he began, abruptly, “I have something to say to you.”

The sea-shell pink on Constance's cheek deepened, for she knew that there could be only one thing which Philip would have to say to her in this formal manner ; but she did not lift her eyes again. She only said, “What is it ? ” very quietly.

“It is something which I think you must know, as well as I,” answered Philip, who had not given much thought to the manner, but only to the matter of what he had to

say. "You must be aware that my uncle and your aunt wish us to marry."

Constance's lips moved slightly in what was apparently an assent, but no audible sound issued from them, and her eyes still remained fastened on her work, though the hand that drew her needleful of silk through the cloth trembled a little.

"I can not tell what you may think of it, on your side," said Philip, who hated himself for his coldness, yet felt unable to summon any more warmth to his manner; "but to me it is — it appears — most desirable."

"Does it?" asked Constance. She lifted her eyes now, and looked at him with a composure which he had not expected. "I understand," she went on, "why, my uncle and aunt desire such an arrangement. I should be very stupid if I did not. But why do *you* desire it?"

"I!" said Philip. He was conscious of coloring. How could he say, "Because *they* do"? and yet what other answer was possible? He looked at the fair face before

him, and felt that another answer should be possible. "Because," he replied, after a slight hesitation, "I think that we might be happy together, you and I. It is true that we have been so closely associated that it is not possible for us to 'fall in love' after the romantic fashion ; but I have a most deep and sincere attachment to you, and I hope that you have a little for me. No one could appreciate your gentleness, your sweetness, your grace of person and manner more than I do. If you are half as well satisfied with me as I am with you," he said, smiling a little, "it will not be difficult for us to gratify those whose hearts are set upon this project."

"I have no fault to find with you," said Constance, leaning back in her chair and regarding him critically, while she turned a diamond ring slowly round upon her finger ; "so you may consider your compliments returned. And it is quite true, no doubt, what you say — that we have known each other too intimately to fall in love. But,

all the same Philip, it seems to me a terribly cold blooded way of — of —”

“Marrying,” said Philip, calmly. “Well, I don’t know. According to American ideas, perhaps so. But in Continental Europe marriages are altogether contracted in this way and I suppose they are generally happy enough. I have not observed that happiness invariably attends marriages here,” he ended, dryly.

“No,” replied Constance, “not invariably ; but there must be a better hope — a better chance — of happiness when people love each other.”

“Their best chance for happiness, in my opinion,” said Philip, “is when they know and understand each other, and when there is an assurance of sympathy between them on all important points. And this reminds me” — his face grew grave. — “that on one very important subject, Constance, we do not possess that sympathy. We are not of the same religious faith.”

“No,” answered Constance, carelessly.

"But I am not prejudiced. I have no objection to *that*."

"Have you not?" asked Philip. "Then we differ very much; for I do object to it. I can not conceive that happiness is possible where husband and wife are not united on that point above all others."

"I had no idea that you were so narrow-minded," said Constance, with cold surprise. "How do you propose to arrange matters, then?"

"I propose," he answered, "to beg you to consider, to examine, the claims of the Catholic faith. If you only would do so, I am sure that you would embrace it. No reasonable and unprejudiced person has ever examined it and failed to be convinced of its truth. Be sure of that. And you could not be an exception to the rule. You have only to consent to be instructed—"

"I!" cried Constance. She looked at him as if divided between indignation, amazement, and amusement. The last finally triumphed, and she burst into laugh-

ter, scornful laughter, and made Philip start to his feet. "*I* become a Roman Catholic!" she said. "How utterly absurd! You must be mad to think of such a thing!"

"Mad!" repeated Philip. "No, I am quite sane; for I shall never marry any woman who is not a Catholic."

"Then you will never marry me," said she, haughtily, rising in turn. "What! do you think yourself so secure of me that you can even impose conditions, and such a condition? Was it not enough that I waived the objection which I might have made to your very objectionable religion? You fancy that *I* would embrace it—*I*!"

"Pardon me," said Philip, with icy coldness. "I have made a mistake, a mistake altogether, which I shall not repeat. You are right. There would be little chance of happiness for us in marriage, and I will tell my uncle that such is my opinion."

"You may tell him that it is also mine," she said, paling a little.

“No,” he replied : “I shall say nothing of you. The responsibility is mine. I have made a condition from which I can not recede, and which he will no doubt consider as unreasonable as you do ; so the whole blame of refusal will rest, and rest justly, on me. Let me advise you” (significantly) “to leave it there.”

XII.

It was with a sense of relief that Philip felt, after his interview with Constance, that all irresolution and doubt were over, and that he had now only to let his uncle know that he could not comply with his wishes. The last was a necessity from which he shrank, feeling keenly how sharp the disappointment would be ; but he had no thought of evasion or delay. Had it been possible, he would have gone to him at once ; but, as it chanced, Mr. Thornton was out of the city, and would not return for several days. So much delay, therefore, was unavoidable. Whether he was grateful or sorry for it, Philip hardly knew. He would have preferred, in his own phrase, "to have the matter over" ; yet he was aware that a little time to reflect on his course afterward was desirable. His uncle had threatened that if he did not comply with his wishes, it would

make a great change in his intentions toward him ; and if those intentions were to be changed, Philip knew that his mode of life would change also.

"I must be prepared for the worst," thought the young man. "If he declines to have anything more to do with me, I shall have no right to complain. Luckily, I have some small means of my own, no debts, and a head that ought to be worth something. After all, there are worse things than 'a crust of bread and liberty,' if it comes to that."

He was rather exhilarated than depressed by the prospect, and, without asking himself what had wrought so great a change in his views — for certainly narrow means, and the narrowing of life which they imply, had not seemed to him very desirable before—he determined to learn without delay what prospects would be his if his circumstances materially altered.

Ignorant of the change in Graham's sentiments toward him, it was to Graham that

his thoughts instinctively turned for practical counsel, and his steps soon followed his thoughts. When he entered the office of the young lawyer, he found him, as usual, absorbed in his books, and evidently not very well pleased to be interrupted. In fact, his reception was so far from gracious that Philip hesitated to remain.

"If I disturb you," he remarked when Graham indicated a chair, "I will not sit down."

"Oh, disturb! — of course you disturb me!" replied the other. "But if you have anything important to say, you might as well say it now. I shall hardly be less busy another time."

Philip thought this ungraciousness was only "Graham's way," and sat down. "What I have to say is important only to myself," he observed. "I can not expect you to find it so ; yet I hope you will give me your ear and your advice. You are always so candid that I need not adjure you

to be honest. Tell me, then, do you think I could make a lawyer?"

This question was so different from what Graham had feared and expected, that he stared at the young man a moment without replying. Philip smiled as he met his eyes.

"Your astonishment is not complimentary," he said. "Do you rate my abilities so low?"

"My astonishment has nothing to do with your abilities," Graham answered. "They are good enough, as you know very well. What surprises me is that you should think of embracing a laborious and exacting profession when there is no need for you to do so — that is, unless you wish to be a lawyer merely in name."

"I should never wish to be anything merely in name," replied Philip, flushing a little. "You have certainly a very poor opinion of me."

"I have never suspected you of loving work for work's sake; few people do," said Graham. "And you have probably little

idea, few people, again, have that, of how much labor is required to make a lawyer who takes any rank in the profession."

"I have some idea," replied Philip; "and, though I do not love work for work's sake, I am capable of it when I have an end in view."

"And what end, may I ask, have you in view in desiring to become a lawyer?"

"The end of independence. If I can make my bread by the use of my brains, I should prefer that to the use of my hands; and it may be necessary that I should make it."

Graham regarded him curiously. "Have you quarrelled with your uncle?" he asked.

"No," Philip answered, "nor ever shall; because it takes two to make a quarrel. But I can not agree to all his wishes, and he may change his intentions toward me; in short, I prefer to be prepared for any event."

"I see," said Graham. (He appeared to see a good deal; for he gazed straight before him for some time without speaking. When

he did speak it was in a tone of studious reserve.) "There is no reason why you should not become a lawyer, and succeed at the bar," he said. "It depends entirely upon yourself, and is a question merely of industry and application. But, of course, you know that time is required — time and means."

"I have some means of my own," Philip answered. "My father left me a little property. I can, therefore, command both. So tell me what to do."

Graham told him, but in every word the same reserve was perceptible. When his brief statement was over he added: "I must warn you, however, that after all this is done — after you have made your course in the law school, and obtained your license — you will, in all probability, have long to wait before you can command any practice, and it may not be worth much after it comes."

"I know all that," Philip answered. "If I were merely intent on making money, I

might make it much more quickly by following in my uncle's footsteps. But I prefer a more intellectual life with less prosperity."

"And more integrity, I hope," observed Graham.

The words escaped him without premeditation, almost without intention. He scarcely realized what he had said, until he saw the flash that came into Philip's eyes, as the latter rose to his feet.

"You will understand," he said, "that I can not suffer such a remark as that to pass. What do you mean by it?"

The stern challenge of his tone roused all of Graham's repressed animosity.

"I mean," he answered, "what is well known, that your uncle is deficient in integrity. But I should not have made such a remark to you," he added, with a faint recollection of the demands of ordinary courtesy. "The words escaped me unintentionally. I — beg your pardon."

Philip made a gesture as if putting the

apology aside. He had suddenly grown very pale. "Your breach of courtesy to *me* does not matter," he said : "but the charge against my uncle is one which you must either substantiate or retract."

"It is easy enough to substantiate it," replied Graham, coldly. "But I should prefer that you would drop the subject."

"That is impossible," said Philip. "You must either prove your assertion, or I shall hold it to be false."

The other started to his feet, then remembered himself, and sat down again. Philip was in the right ; having made such a charge, Graham had no ground to resent being called to account for it.

"It is a pity," he said, "that you insist ; but as you do, of course I must speak. One proof, I suppose, will suffice. You are, perhaps, by this time aware that Robert Percival (now dead) was for a time your uncle's partner. You are probably also aware that he died a poor man, and left his wife and

daughter without any means of subsistence. Do you know how that occurred ?”

“Yes,” answered Philip ; “I have been told that he brought the firm to the verge of ruin by imprudent speculation, and then gave up his property to make good what he had lost. It was hard, if you will, but —”

“Hard !” repeated Graham. He rose again, and the two men stood facing each other. “Listen,” he said, “since you *will* have the truth. Robert Percival indeed speculated, but it was not true that it was without the knowledge of his partner. That partner not only knew what was done, but he also knew exactly the value of the stocks speculated in. There came a day when these dropped suddenly in value. Then Thornton said to his partner ; ‘The firm is on the verge of bankruptcy, and *you* are responsible for it.’ What could the other do ? It was true that he had conducted the speculations on his own responsibility, though taking the consent of his partner for granted. He gave up his property, as

you have said, to make good what he had lost, and the partnership was dissolved."

"Well," said Philip, as the voice of the other ceased, "what is there in this more than I have heard already?"

"There is this," replied Graham: "I have been told, by men who would make no such assertion rashly, that James Thornton *knew the real value* of those stocks when he professed to believe himself on the verge of ruin. However that might be, they afterwards appreciated and became as valuable as Robert Percival had believed that they would. Did Thornton then make amends to the man whom he had robbed? Not at all. He retained everything, including the property which Percival had made over to him—real estate in an advancing part of the city—and built his fortune on that wrong."

Philip felt himself turning cold. The assertions, as they were uttered, seemed but his own fears put into words. Yet he made

still an effort against the certainty that was oppressing him.

"If this were true," he said, "why did not Robert Percival claim what was due to him? I am no lawyer, but I know that there must be in law an equitable remedy for such a wrong."

"Certainly there is," answered Graham. "But Robert Percival died within a year after the partnership was dissolved, leaving his wife and daughter in poverty and helplessness. Who was there, then, to press his claim against a man so powerful in the might of riches?"

Silence fell, and after a moment Philip sat down in the chair from which he had risen, and buried his face in his hands. Graham's heart smote him for what he had done, as he read in this attitude all the pain and humiliation which had so suddenly fallen on the head that, with its bright locks, seemed made for sunshine and prosperity. A sharp doubt of his own motives added to

his regret, and softened his tone when he presently said :

"I am sorry, Thornton — very sorry that I was led to speak of such a matter. I beg your pardon again, and I hope that this time you will accept my apology."

"What does it matter," asked Philip, lifting his head, "whether you spoke of it to me or not, *if it is true*? It is that alone which concerns me. I would give my right hand at this moment to be sure that it is not true. But how can I satisfy myself?"

"I can give you the names of my informants," said Graham ; and he named two or three men of high station and irreproachable honor.

"It is not possible for me to go to them or to any one else to inquire concerning my uncle's affairs," replied Philip ; "but I can and I will go to himself. He shall know what is said of him, and he shall have the opportunity to prove his integrity."

Graham gave him a quick glance. "My dear fellow," he said, "you will only do

harm to yourself by approaching your uncle on that subject. I do not wish to hurt you further, but there is one proof, of which you and I must feel the force. It was after that affair that he gave up his religion."

Philip shrank a little. He, indeed, felt the force of the proof, but it did not alter his determination. "It is impossible," he said, "that I can entertain such a suspicion regarding him and not give him an opportunity to set me right. As for the consequences to myself, I care nothing for them. If what you have told me is true, I shall never profit by the result of the wrong."

"Will you not?" said Graham, regarding him keenly. "Yet, after all, you know his fortune is his own. He only owes the Percivals the value of the property unjustly taken from them."

"Would they accept it?" asked Philip, with sudden eagerness.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "I have never heard them allude to such a possibility," he replied. "But why should

they not accept it as a matter of rightful restitution? We are discussing something that will never come to pass, however. James Thornton will never make such restitution."

"Would to God that *I* could make it!" exclaimed Philip. He sprang to his feet and walked across the office, then turned and came back to where Graham stood, with his face grown hard. "Does she—does Miss Percival know all that you have told me?" he asked.

"Of course she knows it," Graham answered, coldly. "She has always known it."

"And yet she has treated me with the courtesy, the kindness of an angel!" said Philip. "While I—I should never have had the presumption to approach her. And I would not have done so if I had known. Why did you not tell me that first time I ever saw her—when I asked you to present me, and you rightly declined—why did you not tell me then all that you have told me now?"

"It did not seem my place to tell you," Graham answered. "Although," he added, frankly, "I think I should have done so if I had imagined that you were likely to meet her afterwards. But nothing appeared less probable."

"It was a mere chance," observed Philip; "and I fear that I have annoyed her through my ignorance. But I shall not annoy her again — now that I know how great a strain it must have been upon her charity to treat me as she has done."

"Oh! her charity is equal to a strain," said Graham, who felt at once gratified, and ashamed of his gratification. "And she has a very high-minded way of regarding the matter. She did not feel that *you* were in any degree accountable for your uncle's conduct; although, of course, Thornton is not a name that sounds very pleasantly to Percival ears."

"I—suppose not," replied Philip. "Well, I can keep mine from sounding any more

in Miss Percival's ears. And now I will not trespass longer on your time. I came to you for advice, and I have received instead some painful information ; but perhaps it may make my way clearer in the end."

XIII.

It is doubtful if there is any pang, among the infinitely various sufferings of human life, keener than that with which a young and upright soul learns for the first time that shame has touched it. And if this shame comes through one whom it has trusted and honored, the blow falls with a force that sometimes destroys all faith in human nature. The blow which had fallen on Philip Thornton did not have this effect, but it filled him with a sickness of the spirit impossible to describe. Dishonor seemed to come so close — to touch, to lay hold upon him, as it were — his very name was stained with it, and the money which he had spent so freely — the golden key that opened all doors to him — was the direct fruit of it. He felt as if he could never hold up his head again in the sight of men. And to be obliged to judge, to condemn, the uncle who

had been as a father to him — this necessity in itself contained infinite bitterness for his affectionate and grateful nature. To escape from it, he tried to take refuge in a vague hope that Mr. Thornton would be able to explain the circumstances which bore so dark an aspect ; yet even while he thought this, he knew that he had no expectation of the kind.

He passed several days of mental suffering before Mr. Thornton returned. He was so changed by it — so pale, so absent, so manifestly out of spirits, — that Mrs. Thornton, who had been incensed against him by Constance's report of the conversation between them, felt her heart melt and her indignation subside. She leaped to the natural feminine conclusion that he was suffering because the marriage prospect had been interrupted, and she said to herself that no doubt the offensive condition which he had made was "a dictation of the priests." In that case — in any case — she felt sure that her husband would summarily make an

end of it : and, pending his interposition, she allowed herself to be softened by Philip's changed aspect.

Philip, on his part, had almost forgotten that there was a question of marrying Constance, and he treated her so entirely as usual, that the young lady, who by no means shared her aunt's opinion with regard to him, was moved to exasperation. Did he mean to show her that he cared nothing for her refusal ? Her pride could find no other reading for his manner. He might seem pale and out of spirits, but the instinct which seldom deceives a woman told her that she had nothing to do with this condition. He might, indeed, be grieving (so she reflected, with a smile which did not become her lip,) over the prospect of losing even a part of the fortune which should have been theirs jointly and undivided ; but he must be aware that the lion's share would be his ; for was he not a Thornton, " while I am only an outsider, as far as the

Thornton money is concerned!" sighed Constance.

She did not sigh this only to herself: she imparted it to Mr. Bellamy one day when they were particularly confidential, and she told him the history of Philip's proposal — if proposal it could be called. Bellamy listened with an impassive air. They were sitting in the garden together, and he was drawing cabalistic characters on the gravel walk with his stick while she spoke. But when she finished he looked up, and his eyes betrayed that his impassiveness was only outward.

"If that is the state of the case, Constance," he remarked, "why should you not consent to marry *me*?"

Constance flushed, but it was evident from her composure that this was by no means the first time that the question had been addressed to her.

"My dear Jack," she said, "what has 'the state of the case' to do with your position or with mine? I have pointed out to

you at least a dozen times, and you have always ended by agreeing with me, that we are much too poor to think of marrying."

"I have ended by agreeing with you?" repeated Bellamy. "I am not sure of that. I have agreed certainly that you know best whether or not you care to risk matrimony with me and my moderate means. But that we are much too poor to think of marrying — that I have not agreed to. For myself, I am quite willing to risk it; though I can not feel it right to urge you to make a sacrifice that you might regret."

"That I certainly *should* regret," said Constance, frankly. "Remember that once in my life I have known what it was to be poor. I was only a child at the time, it is true; but one does not forget some things. I am not, therefore, like the romantic girls who, brought up in luxury from their cradles, know nothing of what poverty means, and rush blindly into it. I have no assurance that my uncle would give me any-

thing whatever, unless I marry Philip. You see *I* am no Thornton."

"Not yet," answered Bellamy; "and I hope you never may be one. As for the fortune however, I do not believe that Mr. Thornton would leave you portionless, after regarding you so long as his adopted daughter."

"Adopted only to serve as a wife for Philip," said Constance. "I have always understood my destiny. But really Philip's condition, and his manner of making it, were too much even for me. I have no religious prejudices; no doubt Romanists can be saved as well as other people; but the idea of being called upon to become one was too absurd. What provoked me most, however was the insufferable degree of assurance which the laying down of such a condition proved. As if I would be glad to be taken on any terms that pleased him!"

"Well, you have understood him," observed Bellamy. "And now — what is to be the next move?"

"There is no move possible for me," she answered. "I have only to wait, and see what Uncle Thornton will say."

"In short" (with a perceptible inflexion of bitterness) "you are simply a puppet in the hands of Mr. Thornton!"

"I suppose it seems so," she replied. "But, you see, he has power to make or mar all my life. If he would leave me or give me a share—only a share—of his fortune, I could then marry whom I pleased."

"And if he does not?" said Bellamy, looking at her intently.

She colored under the look, but answered, steadily: "Then I shall have to marry some rich man, who may not be as unobjectionable as Philip. That reflection has always kept me from rebelling against the destiny arranged for me."

"Your wisdom and your philosophy are certainly admirable," said Bellamy, with a tone of mockery in his voice. "I feel deeply how very foolish and romantic I must appear in your eyes."

"And I feel that I appear very mercenary in *yours*," she answered. "But I can not help it. I know as well as I know that I am existing that if I were foolish enough to marry you, without any more means than we possess at present, your regret would be as great and as lasting as my own. Indeed it is likely that it would be much greater ; for no man who lives as you do could resign himself cheerfully to the narrow straits and cares of poverty. Oh ! Jack, I know them, and abhor them ! Never, never can I face them voluntarily !"

"I shall never again ask you to do so," said Bellamy, gravely ; "for I see that if I gained your consent it would only be to make you miserable. And perhaps, you are right. For people brought up as we have been, the expedient might prove — a mistake."

"It would !" she cried. "For those who have always been accustomed to narrow means, there is no hardship in facing comparative poverty ; but *we* should have to

change our whole mode of life, and I—could not endure it.”

“So,” said Bellamy, returning to his characters on the sand, “it is to be Thornton, if he gives up his condition, or some other *rich* man ?”

“Unless Uncle Thornton will secure me some fortune of my own.”

“And in that case ?”

“Ah, in that case —” she paused an instant, then finished softly, “I should marry *you*.”

Meanwhile, unconscious of the disappointment in store for him, Mr. Thornton was journeying homeward. He arrived a day or two after the week he had granted Philip was expired, and the latter was, therefore, not surprised to be summoned without loss of time to give his decision. It was in the evening. Uncle and nephew had met for the first time at dinner, and afterwards, instead of following the ladies into the drawing-room, Mr. Thornton requested Philip to come with him into the library.

The young man obeyed. The matter had better be over, he felt ; and yet his heart sank as he followed his uncle into the room, which had begun to have such disagreeable associations for him. It was filled now with the softly diffused-light of an argand lamp, and seemed a place for study and meditation rather than for such a conflict of opposing wills and passions as Philip's prophetic soul told him must inevitably be the result of the disclosures which he had to make.

Mr. Thornton sat down in his usual chair, and looked at the young man, who paused and stood, leaning one shoulder against the carved mantel, before him.

"Well," he said, "it is not likely that you have forgotten the subject of our last conversation here together. What have you to tell me ?"

"I have to tell you," Philip answered, quietly — for this seemed to him a very unimportant matter compared to what was behind — "that, after reflecting upon your

wishes, I decided to comply with them, if Constance would consent to become a Catholic. I felt that not even to gratify you could I run the risk of an utter want of sympathy between my wife and myself on that important point. I asked her if she would be willing to take a change of religion into consideration — to examine the Catholic faith. She replied that she was not willing to do so, and therefore I am reluctantly obliged to inform you that I can not, on my side, think of marrying a woman who refuses even to look into the truth."

This speech left Mr. Thornton for a moment positively speechless with astonishment and anger. But it was not long before the latter found words. "What!" he cried, "you have the audacity to tell me that you will not marry Constance because she does not choose to embrace your religion? You must be mad! Do you think that I will accept such a paltry excuse, or allow a demand that you had no right whatever to make, to interfere with the execution of my plans?"

"My dear uncle," said Philip, calmly, "there is no good in our exchanging angry or excited words. You have told me your wishes, and I tell you respectfully but firmly I am unable to comply with them. There is an end to the matter for I can not recede from my position. My mind is quite made up on that point."

"It is *not* an end of the matter !" replied Mr. Thornton, bringing his hand violently down on the table beside him. "You were never more mistaken in your life than when you imagine so. Do you suppose that, after all that I have done for you, I am going to allow you to thwart me in a matter so important as this — one on which the disposition of my fortune depends — and lay down conditions as if you were master of the situation ?"

A hot reply rose to Philip's lips, but he checked it. After all, much *had* been done for him, and the memory of past benefits made him forgive the ungenerousness of the taunt.

"It is impossible for me to say how much I regret that I can not return all your kindness — kindness which I feel deeply, and gratefully acknowledge — by gratifying you in this matter," he said. "But it is altogether out of the question. Constance and I are really not sympathetic in any respect ; but this point of religious difference goes so deep, strikes so into the very roots of life, that it can not be ignored."

"I suppose the priests are at the bottom of this sudden attack of religious fervor," said Mr. Thornton, with a sneer. "You have listened to them, now listen to me. Either you must give up this absurd freak, and agree to marry Constance without any more folly, or I shall change my intentions, and leave my fortune entirely away from you."

"That is a threat which has no power to move me," answered Philip. "I do not desire any share in your fortune."

"Indeed !" said Mr. Thornton, with a stare of wrath and incredulity. "Since when have you learned to despise wealth ?"

"I do not despise wealth in general," replied the young man. "It is a great power, for good as well as for evil. But"—he suddenly grew very pale—"I can not desire for myself wealth that has been in any degree unjustly obtained."

"What do you mean?" demanded Mr. Thornton, in a voice almost inarticulate with rage.

"I mean," Philip answered, "that I have heard the story of Robert Percival."

XIV.

THE two men regarded each other for fully a minute in silence after those words were spoken. Then a sudden change came over the elder man. He who had been as hot as fire now grew cold as ice. "I begin to understand," he said, "I have not been as blind as you perhaps imagined. After your appeal to me some time ago on behalf of the person whose name you have just mentioned, I caused some inquiries to be made. I heard of the existence of a good-looking young woman, and I also heard of your acquaintance with her, although you had assured me that you possessed no personal knowledge of those people."

"What I told you was true," replied Philip. "I had then no personal knowledge whatever of them. It was afterward that I became, by accident, acquainted with Miss Percival."

"Ah! afterward!" said Mr. Thornton, with the same cold sarcasm. "That leaves your extraordinary intercession in her behalf unaccounted for; but it is quite sufficient to account for the sudden religious scruples which interfere with your marrying Constance and for the insult which you have just permitted yourself to insinuate toward me. Understand," he went on, fixing his eyes on the pale face of the young man, "that it is a matter of complete indifference to me what the Percivals may say regarding me; but that *you* should listen to their slanders, and venture to repeat them to me — that is something which I can not overlook."

"Miss Percival — I do not know, have never even seen, her mother — has never mentioned your name to me," said Philip. "My acquaintance with her is exceedingly slight, and I solemnly assure you that it was not from her that I heard the story which has given me so much pain. A person totally unconnected with the Percival

family told it to me as it is generally believed. If," he continued, with agitation — "if you can disprove it, you will lift from my mind and heart the heaviest burden they have ever known."

"Do you think," demanded Mr. Thornton, contemptuously, "that I shall condescend to disprove for you — for you indeed! — slanders to which you should never have listened!"

"It is not for *me* that I ask you to disprove them," Philip answered, "but for your own honor. Surely you do not know what men say and believe of you! Shall I tell you what they say? It is hard — but you ought to know. They say" — looking with pained eyes into the face so steadily regarding him — "that you knew the value of the stocks in which Robert Percival had invested, even while they were depreciated, and that when they had become as valuable as he anticipated you still retained the property which he had given up to make good your loss."

"Well," said Mr. Thornton — and his cold tones made a striking contrast to the agitated accents of the other — "and what if they do say this? They might say much worse, and I should not think it worth a moment's notice."

"But your good name?" urged Philip; "your reputation for integrity, surely you think that of importance?"

"My name is good on Change," replied the other, brusquely. "Everyone knows its worth *there*. I have no time to trouble myself with considering how it is valued elsewhere. I do not find," with a sarcastic smile, "that people are given to shunning me."

"No," said Philip. "There is a part of the world — a large part — that condones anything in the man who is rich and successful. But it does not seem to me that a man of honor could be satisfied with that kind of respect. He would also want the good opinion of men whose opinion is worth having, My dear uncle" — in his ear-

nestness he stepped nearer the elder man — “I beg you to consider for a moment what such charges as these mean, how they affect your position in the eyes of men who are not dazzled by wealth. For my sake, if not for your own, explain them, deny them, if they can be explained or denied.”

Perhaps Mr. Thornton was more moved than he wished to betray by these words and the expression of the young face looking down on him. It may have seemed to him in some sort a Nemesis — this pale, set countenance with its pleading eyes. At all events, his own eyes dropped for the first time.

“For your sake !” he repeated. “You certainly deserve a great deal from me — you who have not only set my wishes at defiance, but who make yourself the mouth-piece of my enemies !”

“Put me out of the question, then,” said Philip, too intent upon his point to answer the last charge, “and for your own sake give me the right to deny these statements.”

“What is there to deny?” said Mr. Thornton, looking up again and speaking with much irritation. “It is quite true that when I found myself on the verge of ruin through the unprincipled speculation of my partner, I forced him to reimburse me for the losses I had sustained. His property, of which so much has been said, did not cover those losses; but after much struggle and mental anxiety I pulled through. Long afterward the stock which had been left on my hands as waste paper appreciated in value, but what then? Was I bound to reopen a closed business and unsettle my affairs by accounting to the Percivals—the man himself was dead—for what had passed into my hands in a perfectly legitimate manner? It would have been quixotic folly, and I am not a fool. Now I have answered you, and you may answer the statements about which you are concerned as you please, only understand that this subject is closed between us once for all.”

“Shall I tell you how I would like to

answer those statements ?" asked Philip, undismayed by the peremptory sharpness of the last words. "I should like to be able to say that, thinking of the higher moral law rather than of the failing human law that gives you the right to retain this property, you have accounted to the heirs of Robert Percival for all that passed into your hands, and have so cleared your name and your soul from any shade of wrong-doing."

"Wrong-doing !" repeated Mr. Thornton. "Your insolence passes all bounds. I have listened to you quite long enough. Leave the room, sir, and remember that you need not present yourself to me again until you are prepared to comply *unconditionally* with my wishes."

"I fear, then, that it will be long before I shall see you again," said Philip, much moved. "I am deeply grieved that I should seem to make an ungrateful return for your kindness and generosity. I can only hope that some day you will recognize that your demand is unreasonable."

“Unreasonable !” cried Mr. Thornton, who was growing very hot again. “I am to give you a princely fortune and exact nothing in return, forsooth ! or, better still, I am to endow the Percival girl with a fortune in order that you may marry her ! I repeat that I am not a fool, and I tell you that not a sixpence of my money shall ever go to the Percivals, directly or indirectly. Lay that to heart, and now — go !”

He pointed to the door, his hand trembling with anger, and Philip had no alternative than to obey the gesture. He recognized that there was nothing to be gained by prolonging the interview in his uncle's present state of mind. He bent his head, therefore, and, without trusting himself to speak again, turned and left the room.

He went straight to his chamber and made immediate preparations for leaving the house. Mr. Thornton's command coincided with his own wishes in this respect. He felt that it was no longer a place for him. He rested under the odium of refus-

ing to marry Constance, he had alienated the feelings of his uncle, and he wished to profit no longer by money that had a stain of moral wrong upon it. All of these things pressed upon him as reasons to be gone, yet it was with a sad heart that he prepared for a leave-taking that might be final. Since he entered it as a boy of twelve, this had been a happy home to him ; here he had received unvarying kindness, and benefits without number. Thinking of the last, his resolution almost failed, for he had none of that dominant self-will which makes resistance to the wishes of others rather agreeable than otherwise to some people. In his softened mood, in his deep horror for ingratitude, it is likely that he might have surrendered altogether as far as Constance was concerned if the recollection of the Percival matter had not made him glad of any excuse to escape the burden of unjustly-acquired wealth.

So, when his preparations were all made, he cast a look of farewell around the room

that he might never enter again, and went down in search of Mrs. Thornton. Under no circumstances could he leave without bidding *her* adieu, although he was well aware that he was alienating her also. Fortunately Constance was out, spending the evening ; but he feared to find Mr. Thornton with his wife. This proved an unfounded fear, however : the lady was alone in her sitting-room, reading a novel, which she laid down as he entered. Though she looked so serene, so steeped as it were in quiet, she had in fact been wondering what could detain her husband and his nephew so long. When the latter entered, she looked up with a glance of mingled relief and inquiry.

"Where is your uncle ?" she asked.
"Did you leave him in the library ?"

"I left him in the library half an hour ago," the young man answered. "My dear aunt, I come to thank you for all your great kindness to me and to bid you good-bye."

"Philip ! what do you mean ?" she ex-

claimed, startled by his manner as well as his words. "Where are you going?"

"Oh, not far; only into the city for the present," he answered. "But I may not see you again for some time, since my uncle thinks it best that we should live apart, and I agree with him."

"Your uncle — thinks it best that you should live apart!" she repeated, incredulously. "You must be mistaken. You must know that he is devoted to you. I am not sure but that you are the person in the world he cares most for."

"I hope not," said Philip, gravely; "for I have been forced to disappoint him, and he can not forgive this. He has told me plainly not to present myself to him again until I am prepared to fulfill his wishes. So, you see, I have no option but to go."

Mrs. Thornton's delicate face grew somewhat cold; but she was a kind woman; she was fond of Philip, and her heart, as well as that of her husband, had been set on the hope of marriage between Constance and

himself. Therefore, although she was vexed with the young man for his insensibility and obstinacy, she determined to play the part of peacemaker, if possible.

"And why," she asked, "can you not fulfill his wishes? Surely, Philip, you are not so bigoted as to sacrifice your prospects in life, the opportunity of gratifying your uncle, and I may say even your own happiness — for I have too good an opinion of you to believe that you will be happy when you are separated from us all — to a narrow religious scruple? How can you be so unreasonable as to expect Constance to give up her religion for yours?"

"My dear aunt," answered Philip, who would gladly have avoided this discussion, but saw that there was no hope of doing so, "I do not expect Constance to give up her religion. I only asked her if she would not examine the claims of the Catholic faith, in the hope that by examination she would be led to embrace it. You must agree with me that it is desirable that those whose lives are

united in the closest possible manner should be united also in belief."

"Yes," said Mrs. Thornton in the tone of one who concedes a doubtful point, "it is surely desirable, but it is not necessary. If two people are reasonable and liberal, there is no reason why they should not each go his or her own way without anything disagreeable at all."

"And the children probably would go *their* own way also," rejoined Philip, dryly. "It is necessary to look a little ahead in these matters. I suppose I do seem to you bigoted," he added, in a tone of regret, "but at least you will admit that I am the chief sufferer thereby. My uncle will probably make Constance his heiress, and she will be able to marry as she likes. Of course you know that she does not care for me."

"If she does not, it is your own fault," observed Mrs. Thornton. "You could easily have made her care for you ; but you have neglected her in a manner that no woman

— and especially a woman so much admired as Constance — could possibly endure.”

“I am ready to cry *mea culpa*,” replied Philip, who was nervously anxious to be gone ; “but it is too late now.”

“Nothing is too late,” said Mrs. Thornton, rising, and laying her hand impressively on his arm. “You need not fancy that your uncle will make Constance his heiress. She is not a Thornton, and he will not dream of it. His heart is set on *you*. Only to-day when he came in he told me his plans for you — how he wanted to see you married, in the first place, in order that he might make his will, ‘for I have had some symptoms of late that I do not like,’ he said, ‘and a man should be prepared for anything.’ Then he wants you to go into politics, to become distinguished — Oh ! Philip, Philip ! how have you the heart to disappoint him so !”

Philip had not the heart to tell her the reason why, so he felt that the sooner this trying interview was ended, the better. He

took the hand that lay on his arm and kissed it.

"I can not tell you all the motives that actuate me," he said ; "but I beg you to believe that they are strong, else I could never resist your appeal ; I could never leave you to think me cold, hard-hearted, insensible to all your goodness. But I can not remain : it is impossible. Forgive me, if you can — and good-bye."

He turned quickly, and before she could utter another word, had left the room.

XV.

“CAN you tell me,” said Alice Percival to Graham, “what is the matter with Mr. Thornton?”

The two were walking down the street together, and they had just met Philip, who bowed, almost without lifting his eyes. After he passed, Miss Percival turned to her companion with the above remark. That gentleman looked a little surprised and not very well pleased.

“Is anything the matter with him?” he asked. “I have not observed it.”

The young lady gave him a quick glance. “I thought you were a friend of his,” she said.

“Oh, yes, I am a friend — though not exactly of the Damon and Pythias type,” the other replied. “I do not see very much of him, and I did not observe him when he passed just now.”

"I have observed for some time how much he is changed," said Miss Percival, quietly. "When I first met him a few months ago, I thought him the embodiment of prosperity in its most inoffensive form — one with whom the world went so well that he could not imagine its going otherwise with any one else, and whose overflowing sunshine was agreeable and contagious. But of late he is greatly altered : he is pale and grave, and altogether different."

Graham looked less and less pleased. "I was not aware," he said, stiffly, "that you knew him so well as to be able to detect all this."

"I hardly know him at all," she answered, with the same quietness. "But this change is so great that it seems to me it would strike any one. I see him in the choir, you know ; and I meet him now and then at choir-practice — although of late he has neglected that very much, greatly to Mr. Richter's disgust."

"Things are not going quite so smoothly

with him as they were," observed Graham, overcoming by a great effort his reluctance to speak of Philip at all. "He has had a — disagreement with his uncle, which has materially changed his prospects. That is enough to make him look grave ; and if he looks pale, that is probably because he has been burning the midnight oil somewhat. He has entered on the study of the law with commendable assiduity."

"A disagreement with his uncle !" repeated Miss Percival. "I am going to ask you a singular question, Mr. Graham, and I beg that you will answer it frankly. Has this disagreement anything to do with his acquaintance with *me* ?"

"With you !" said Graham, amazed. "Certainly not. How could you imagine such a thing ?"

"Because his manner has changed so singularly to me," she answered. "For a time I thought I should have the rather ungracious task of repelling his advances toward friendliness — advances which I un-

derstood very well sprang from the sunny frankness of his disposition, and his ignorance of any reason why I should not respond to them. But of late he avoids even the most trivial intercourse — such as an exchange of words about our singing — in a manner so marked that it is impossible to mistake the intention of it. If his uncle had heard of our acquaintance — slight as it was — and had objected to it, that might account for his manner.”

“No,” said Graham. “His disagreement with his uncle was on an altogether different ground; and as for the change in his manner to you, that also has a different reason from the one you imagine. His advances toward friendliness were, as you say, made in ignorance; but that ignorance is now at an end. He knows the true story of James Thornton’s conduct to your father, and feels that he has no longer any right to your acquaintance.”

“He knows it — does he?” she said, musingly. “I am half sorry. He seemed so

full of confidence that there was no wrong involved. How did he learn the truth ?”

“Well — I told him,” replied Graham. “The matter came up, and I thought he ought to know.”

She gave him another glance. “It was rather a disagreeable thing to tell,” she said. “I wonder you thought it necessary to do so.”

“He insisted upon knowing. I fancy that he had a suspicion of something wrong; and when I dropped a word or two reflecting on his uncle’s integrity, he demanded an explanation. I had therefore no alternative but to comply with his demand.”

“And how did he take it ?” she asked, in a low tone.

“It was a severe blow to him, and he declared that he would ask his uncle to explain the suspicious circumstances. But if he ever asked him I imagine that the answer was not very satisfactory, for he has avoided me since then, and I am sure that he would have come to me at once if he had

been able to clear up the matter — which is, we know, impossible.”

“So this accounts for the change toward me,” she said. “Yet surely he can not think that I hold him responsible for the wrong-doing of another.”

“No,” answered Graham, “he does not think so. He spoke with gratitude of your kindness and courtesy ; but he also expressed his regret that he had ever forced himself upon your notice.”

“It was an unnecessary regret,” she replied, “for I have no recollection of his ever forcing himself upon me at all.”

Graham did not remind her that she had spoken a few minutes earlier of friendly advances which it might have been necessary to repel. He was silent, thinking that he did not like this interest in Philip Thornton, and that he would say nothing more about him. But in forming the resolution he reckoned without Miss Percival, who presently resumed :

“And you are certain that what he learned

from you had nothing to do with his estrangement with his uncle ? ”

“ There are not many things that one can affirm oneself to be positively certain of,” Graham answered ; “ but this seems to me one, because he came to me for advice about studying law, saying that he could not comply with some wishes of his uncle, who had therefore changed his intentions toward him. It was on that occasion the conversation took the turn I have mentioned, and I told him the story of your father’s business connection with Mr. Thornton.”

They walked on silently for several minutes, and Graham was about to introduce a new topic of conversation when Alice spoke again.

“ I am sorry for him,” she said, in a tone as if thinking aloud. “ He looks as if he had suffered.”

“ That is not very uncommon in this world,” replied the now exasperated Graham. “ We must all suffer sooner or later ; and if Thornton has never to endure any-

thing worse than finding out that his uncle is deficient in honesty, he will get off very lightly."

"Many people," observed the young lady, coldly, "would not suffer at all from such a knowledge. I am perfectly aware of that. But it gives me a good opinion of Mr. Thornton to know that he *has* suffered."

There did not seem to be anything to reply to this, so Graham held his peace ; and a few minutes later they reached Miss Percival's door, where the subject was finally dropped. But although dropped it by no means left Alice's mind. She observed Philip with fresh interest the next time that she met him, and his changed aspect struck her more and more. She resolved that on the first opportunity she would speak to him, and show him that she did not regard him as identified with his uncle. But it was some time before this opportunity arrived ; for Philip was very careful to avoid her, and their chance meetings were few.

But at last accident came to her assistance.

The season was by this time far advanced. People were leaving the city for summer resorts, and among the rest Mrs. King prepared to go. The day before her departure Alice went to say good-bye. It was late in the afternoon. The sun had set, and after a very warm day a slight breeze had sprung up and cooled the air. The two ladies sat at the open window of the drawing-room, outside which the green foliage of some trees stirred softly, and talked of Mrs. King's plans for the Summer.

"And what are *you* going to do?" that lady asked at length. "You surely do not intend to remain here all the season?"

"In the vacation mamma and I generally go to the country for fresh air," Alice answered. "But we can not go very far. Travelling is expensive, and places of resort still more expensive. Then mamma needs special comforts, which must be secured, you know."

"I know that I should like to be able to throw some prosperity into your life and hers," said Mrs. King. "How dreadful it is that a creature born for a wide existence, as you certainly were, should be bound down to such a narrow one!"

"Its narrowness in outward circumstances does not trouble me at all," said Alice, quietly. "My mind and my soul have a wide life, and that is enough."

Mrs. King was silent for a minute, then she remarked: "I never knew until Mr. Graham told me that your adversity is not the result of misfortune, but of dishonesty, in your father's business partner. It seems to me that would make it harder to bear."

"Mr. Graham appears to take a singular interest in telling that story," said Miss Percival. "How did he possibly chance to tell it to you?"

"It was *apropos* of young Thornton," Mrs. King answered. "He came in one evening when you were singing together,

and the sight did not seem to please him. To account for his evident disapproval, he told me why he thought it an undesirable association."

"Mr. Graham should certainly allow me to be the judge of that," replied the other, coldly. "Is it not strange that even Christian people think resentment in some cases an absolute duty !"

"A remnant of the heathen in us all," rejoined Mrs. King. "But it has been on my mind ever since to apologize to you for introducing Philip Thornton. If I had ever heard of this matter, of course I should have asked your permission — though I believe he came in upon us one day when we were sitting together, and there seemed no alternative."

"There was no alternative," Alice answered, "and I assure you I had no objection to knowing him. Why should I have any ? He had nothing to do with his uncle's conduct in a business transaction."

"Very true," said Mrs. King ; "but most

people would not remember that. However, you are not like most people. You are made of quite special clay, as I always knew. By the by, have you seen him lately ?”

“ Only in the choir, and once or twice at Mr. Richter’s. I have been struck by a change in him.”

“ There is a great change. That is the reason I asked if you had seen him. I hear that he has broken with his uncle, or been discarded by the latter. And on what ground, do you suppose ? ”

Alice shook her head. “ I can not even imagine.”

“ Did you ever see Constance Irving ? You know what a beautiful girl she is. Well, she is Mrs. Thornton’s niece, and it has always been understood that the two young people would marry. But suddenly everything has been broken off : Philip has left his uncle’s house, cut society, and gone to studying law. Naturally people were curious to know the meaning of such conduct ; and since everything is known sooner or

later in this delightful world, it has transpired that he declined to fulfil his part of the contract unless Constance would become a Catholic. She refused, his uncle and aunt were indignant at the demand, and the young man was dismissed, to come to his senses or lose his fortune. How people do surprise one sometimes! Who could ever have imagined that it was in him to take so firm a stand on such a ground?"

Alice did not answer for a moment. She was thinking of some words of Graham's uttered a few months before: "He is one of those characters that float with the current, but have no strength to go against it. At present he is a Catholic — after a fashion — but some day the world will offer him an inducement, and he will give up his religion as his uncle has done." She had doubted the accuracy of his judgment at the time, and now she felt how much truer was her instinct than Graham's knowledge. A moment of trial had come, and instead of floating with the current, Philip had stood firm

on a point where many Catholics, of much more apparent fervor, fail.

"People do surprise one very much sometimes," she assented at length. "It should teach us not to be hasty in judgment, I suppose."

"That is the moral to be drawn, of course," said Mrs. King. "But, consciously, or unconsciously, how can one avoid judging? When one sees a gay, worldly young man, who appears to take life as lightly as possible, can one reasonably expect him to develop religious rigor on a point that is not only treated carelessly by many serious Catholics, but that affects his whole future in a more than ordinary way? I confess I could hardly believe the story when it was told to me; but it came directly from Mrs. Thornton's sister, so I suppose there is no doubt of it. His fortitude in right-doing does not appear to have had a very enlivening effect upon him, however."

"Perhaps he is very much in love with

Miss Irving, and feels the separation from her."

The elder lady shook her head. "I don't think he is at all in love with her: they have been too long and too familiarly associated. No doubt there is some attachment, and she is such a lovely girl that he could not dislike the idea of marrying her; but the great inducement, of course, was pleasing his uncle and securing his uncle's fortune. Most men would have done things much worse than marrying a pretty Protestant for that."

"It is a very painful position for him," said Alice, thoughtfully. "I do not wonder that he is so much changed."

Mrs. King suddenly leaned forward. A figure on the street had passed the window and ascended the steps of the house. The next instant the door-bell sounded. "*On parle du soleil et en voici les rayons,*" said she, smiling. "There is Philip Thornton now."

XVI.

MISS PERCIVAL started, and made a slight motion, as if to rise from her chair; but almost immediately sank back again. Why should she avoid Philip? Had she not desired an opportunity to show him that his avoidance of *her* was unnecessary, and what better opportunity could be found than the present? Moreover, the thought occurred to her that it would be the last for some time, since Mrs. King was on the eve of leaving the city, and there was not the least probability of their meeting anywhere else. She kept her seat, therefore, and when Philip was shown into the dusky drawing-room — for sunset had deepened to twilight by this time—he did not recognize her until after he had spoken to Mrs. King. Then, glancing at her companion, he was startled to see Alice Percival leaning forward into the light of the after-glow, which still shone

through the window, and holding out her hand with a friendly gesture.

It appeared for an instant as if he was not going to accept that frankly-offered hand, so much was he surprised ; but before she could draw back, he had taken it into his own, bowing deeply over it. Their hands had never met before, and he felt as if those firm, gentle fingers offered a pledge of amity which he could not refuse. However, he uttered only a word or two in reply to her salutation, and, sitting down, plunged at once into conversation with Mrs. King.

"Yes, I am going away," said that lady; "and quite time it is. The city will soon be unendurable. I wonder that you are here yet."

"I am not going away at all," Philip answered. "You know I have begun to work in earnest, and I must abjure pleasure for a time, at least."

"'Scorn delights and live laborous days,'" said she, smiling. "But you must not forget that some recreation is necessary

to enable one to labor to the best advantage. 'All work and no play makes Jack a very dull boy.' "

"I have had my fair share of play," replied Philip; "and I must take my share of work now. Seriously speaking, I am very much interested in my studies, and I want to obtain my license as soon as possible. After that I can think of recreation."

"I am afraid you are studying too hard," said Mrs. King. "I can not see what you look like just now, but I have observed your appearance several times lately, and I thought you looking pale."

"Oh ! I am very well," answered Philip, hastily, and changed the subject.

Alice leaned back in her chair, and listened without taking part in the conversation. It was not one that interested her, being chiefly about the merits of the different places to which Mrs. King was going, and with which Philip had an extensive acquaintance. After all, the opportunity seemed no opportunity. She had given him

her hand — and evidently much surprised him by doing so, — but beyond that, she had no power to show him the kindliness and respect which she felt. Well, there was probably no real reason why she should do so ; and her failure did not matter. She said this to herself with a slight sigh as she finally rose. The dusk had deepened, street-lamps began to gleam : it was time for her to go.

“ Why, Alice, how quiet you have been ! ” cried Mrs. King, as the tall, graceful figure came toward her. “ What — going ? Oh ! impossible ! You must stay and spend the evening with me.”

“ Unfortunately I can not,” replied Alice. “ My mother will be expecting me.”

“ When you intrench yourself behind your mother, I know there is no hope of moving you,” said Mrs. King with a smile.

While the two ladies exchanged their farewell words, Philip, who had risen also, stood behind his chair, apparently motionless, but really in a state of extreme nervous-

ness. Could he allow Miss Percival to walk home unattended at this hour ? It seemed impossible, yet could he venture to offer to attend her ? That also seemed impossible. He was hesitating over the question, when the young lady suddenly turned around, with a little bow said, "Good-evening, Mr. Thornton," and was passing by. Then he knew that he must at least give her the option of refusing his escort.

"It is late for you to walk home alone," he said. "If you will allow me, I shall be happy to attend you."

"Thank you," she answered, "but it is not quite dark — there is really no need — and you have not finished your visit to Mrs. King."

"Mrs. King will probably permit me to return and make my adieux," said Philip, who recognized by her tone that she did not object to his accompanying her ; and if she did not object, he was quite sure that nothing else should prevent his doing so.

A few minutes later found them on the

street together. When they emerged into the open air they found, as Alice had said, that it was not yet dark : the long twilight of June still held the world with that exquisite mingling of night and day which is so charming. A rosy glow lingered in the West, but overhead stars were shining out of a delicate sky, and the perfume of flowers in unseen gardens filled the air. Philip felt like a man in a dream as he walked by his companion's side, and responded to her gentle advances. It was a pleasure the keener for its absolute unexpectedness, and for his consciousness that it might never be repeated. This consciousness made him, perhaps, a little absent, but he roused himself when Alice said :

"Mr. Richter makes many complaints of you, Mr. Thornton. He thinks you have lost interest in your music."

"So I have," Philip answered. "It has been rather a pain than a pleasure to me of late. I am thinking of leaving the choir."

"Oh ! I hope not !" she said, quickly.

"We have no other voice as good as yours. And why should you lose interest? It was not for your own pleasure that you entered the choir, I am sure."

"No: it was because I thought I might really be of use. But, despite your flattering opinion, I think there are others with better voices and more industry than myself."

"But industry is within our own power," she observed; "and I do not think that one should give up lightly what is done for the service of God. You seem to be developing industry enough in another direction," she added, with a smile:

"My studies, you mean?" he answered. "But that is a matter of necessity. It has become indispensable that I should do something for myself: I do not regret the fact itself: I only regret the reasons which led to it."

He uttered the last words half-unconsciously, but he was not sorry when he realized that he had uttered them. He had a strong inclination to speak openly to Alice

Percival of the matter which concerned them both. As they passed under a lamp, he saw that she lifted her dark eyes to his face with a look which encouraged him to proceed. It was a look of sympathy, for she fancied he was regretting his separation from Miss Irving; but she was mistaken: there was no thought of Constance in his mind at that moment.

“Do you remember,” he said, “the day of the railroad accident, when I told you that, so far as I was aware, there was nothing to prevent our acquaintance? Well, I think it only right to tell you now that I have learned better since then — I have learned that there was much to render it, as you said, ‘unfit’; and I have also learned to appreciate your kindness toward me. How much I must have annoyed you — I, who have no right to know you! — and how unfailing in courtesy and forbearance you were!”

“You did not annoy me at all,” she answered in the same words she had used to

Graham with regard to him. "But I am glad you thought me courteous. Why should I have been anything else ? It never occurred to me for a moment to hold you accountable for the acts of another, or to allow the recollection of such acts to influence my opinion of you or my conduct toward you. What had you to do with the matter ? Simply nothing at all. It strikes me that I have said this to you before."

"You have, but you also said that there was an unfitness in our acquaintance. I did not understand you then, but I understand only too well now, and fully agree with you."

"I think I also told you once what I meant by unfitness," she replied, quietly. "Our lives were cast in such different lines — we had little or nothing in common. And, then, so long as you were closely identified with your uncle, there was a propriety that seemed to forbid any intimate association. I have friends who would have looked upon

it as in some degree compromising my father's memory."

It was not lost upon Philip that she spoke in the past tense. "But now I am no longer closely — or, indeed, at all — identified with my uncle," he said. "It cost me much pain to refuse to comply with his wishes, but there was no alternative which I could entertain. And I may tell *you* that I was glad of an excuse to shake off the weight of wealth stained by wrong. If he had consented to make restitution to you and your mother, I could hardly have refused to do anything that he asked. But he did not consent."

"Is it possible that you proposed it to him?" she asked, with much surprise.

"Could I have failed to do so when I learned at last the true state of the case? I urged him, for the sake of his own honor and his own soul, to right the wrong; but he would not listen to me."

"And that, then, was the cause of your

estrangement ?" she cried, with a flash of intuition. "Ah ! I feared as much !"

"No," he answered, quickly ; "the cause of our estrangement was different. I would not consent to marry Constance unless she became a Catholic. God forgive me if I was glad that she refused ! It gave me an opportunity to make my own life, and to profit no longer by wealth unjustly acquired. I have only one regret connected with the matter," he added, after an instant's pause, "If there were a prospect that this money would ever come to me, *I* could then make restitution. But my uncle is so much incensed against me that I am sure he will find another heir."

"Do not regret what you have done on that score," said Alice, in a low tone. "Neither my mother nor myself could accept anything from *you*. Only he who committed the wrong can make restitution for it."

"He, I fear, never will," answered Philip, in a tone as low as her own. "His pride,

his obstinacy, his love of money — all combine to steel him against the thought."

"Poor man!" said the girl, gently. "Do you know that I never see him — and, of course, I catch a glimpse of him now and then — without a painful sense of pity? To think that he will let a little money stand between him and a clear conscience — the esteem of men and the friendship of God! It is so terribly sad! The thought of restitution never occurred to me; but if for his own sake he were to make it, I would willingly agree to give the money away the next hour."

"It would be yours in justice," replied Philip. "Why should you give it away?"

"I do not think I should like to keep it. But it is scarcely worth while," she added, with a slight smile, "to discuss a contingency, that in all human probability will never take place."

"In human probability, no," said Philip; "but in the probability of divine grace it may. The only hope for my poor uncle is

in that. Would it be asking too much of your charity to beg you to pray that he may obtain this grace ? ”

“No, it is not asking too much,” she answered. “I will very gladly pray for him. See !” She paused and pointed to the window of a church which they were passing. “There is a light at the altar of the Sacred Heart. Let us go in and beg the grace for him now.”

Philip eagerly assented and they turned in under the shadow of the church porch. The doors were not yet closed, and they entered the building, which would have been altogether dark but for the lamp suspended before the high altar, and a red light which burned at the feet of a statue of the Sacred Heart.

When they knelt together before the latter, Philip felt more than ever like a man in a dream. The perfume of roses on the altar filled the church like the fragrance of divine love; the light of the jewel-like lamp fell on the benignant figure, and revealed its

tender aspect ; while soft depths of shadow brooded all around, save where the sanctuary lamp flung its golden radiance on the tabernacle door. He could not glance toward Alice, but he was intensely conscious of her presence ; and it seemed too unreal, too strange to be true, that she was praying for the man who had wronged her father, and who had condemned her own life to the fighting influences, the narrow restrictions of poverty and toil. He thought that such a prayer could not fail — it *must* be granted by Him whose Sacred Heart would recognize its accordance with His own precepts and example.

They remained in the church only a few minutes, and when they came out walked almost silently the short distance which brought them to Miss Percival's door. As they reached this, Alice paused and turned to the young man, who took off his hat with the air of one ready to accept his dismissal at once.

"Since you promised to return to Mrs.

King, I will not ask you to come in this evening," she said; "but another time perhaps you may like to be presented to my mother."

"I should be most happy — if you think Mrs. Percival would not object to receiving me," he answered.

"I do not think she will object," Alice replied. Then, holding out her hand again, "Good-night!" she said.

"You have made it a very good night for me," he responded, with much emotion in his voice, as he took her hand for an instant and was gone.

XVII.

ALICE was right in saying that her mother would not refuse to know Philip, notwithstanding that he bore an objectionable name, especially when she heard how frankly he condemned the conduct of the elder Thornton. Mrs. Percival was, indeed, much interested by Alice's account of their conversation, and, having few interests in her confined life, she was very willing to see the young man who held a great fortune so lightly.

Therefore, to Graham's deep, though of course, silent indignation and disgust, Philip became a visitor in the house where a short time before it would have seemed impossible that he could ever be admitted. And it soon appeared that he was to be a favorite also, as, thanks to the kindness of nature, he had been a favorite everywhere during his life. Mrs. Percival found him

delightful. The ease and grace of his manners, his unfailing deference and sunny disposition reminded her of men whom she had known in her gay and prosperous youth, rather than in her later years of sadness and adversity. What Alice thought of him was not so clearly apparent, but she evidently liked him sufficiently to make him welcome when he came. And Philip was ingenious in finding excuses for coming. Music was a standard excuse, and Mr. Richter found that he had no longer need to deplore his lack of interest or lack of practice.

As the summer days went on, increasing in heat, the fashionable world fled from the city, and Philip would have found himself stranded in social solitude, but for this new association that added so much to his life—which, indeed, seemed to leave nothing else to be desired. Certainly his existence was revolutionized in a way that he could hardly have credited had it been foretold to him six months before. His days, and much of his nights, were spent in hard study, and

almost his sole recreation was to present himself as often as he dared in the Percival parlor, where the lights were usually turned low for coolness, the windows open to the summer night, and Alice sat playing softly at the piano. Some strains of music would always, he was sure, recall to him these evenings—tender *berceuses*, haunting *gondolieds*, into the midst of which she would now and then introduce a noble harmony taken from some Mass of the great composers. They were enchanted evenings, of which Philip did not pause to consider the possible or probable end.

Yet an end, in one form, came, when it was necessary that Mrs. Percival should be removed to the country. Mother and daughter went to a quiet boarding house, half a day's journey from the city; and it was not long before Philip found that some change of air was necessary for him, too. Where could he find it more economically or more pleasantly than at the place where Alice Percival was staying? He presented him-

self at first very diffidently, but the welcome which he received from Mrs. Percival set him at his ease, while it was evident that Alice was not displeased by his appearance. She met him with a simple cordiality, a quiet unconsciousness of any other meaning to his visit than that which he declared, that disappointed even while it relieved him. It was pleasant to think that he might go and come without incurring her displeasure, yet he would have liked to see a little trace of consciousness, a slight perception that it was herself whom he had come to see.

Meanwhile the Thornton house was closed — had been closed since the beginning of the Summer — and the family were in Europe. It was the first time Mr. Thornton had ever quitted his business — had ever relaxed that watchfulness of his many interests which was the secret of his success — had ever taken his attention long enough from stocks and bonds and railroads to think of the beauties of nature or of art. It

was rumored that some significant signs of failing health had led to this tardy holiday, but the rumor did not reach Philip's ears. His uncle's absence was, under existing circumstances, a great relief to him, and he did not doubt that it was also a relief to Mr. Thornton to be absent from Riverport for a time. When he returned it might be possible for them to resume cordial relations without compromising his (Philip's) independence of position. This was the way he comforted himself for the sense of estrangement that weighed heavily upon him.

But nothing speeds time like occupation, and never had a Summer appeared to fly so quickly as this. He was startled when he realized that it was nearing its close. For the last time he prepared to go out to the country place where the Percivals were staying. Another week would find them back in the city ; and, although he certainly did not regret this, he regretted the end of the days he had now and then been priv-

ileged to spend with them, of the rambles through fields and woods to which he had looked forward so eagerly, of sunsets and moonrises surrounded by all the charm of pastoral life.

Now that the end of these things was so near at hand, Philip began to ask himself what was to be the result of this association which had added so much to his existence. He entertained no manner of doubt concerning the nature of the sentiment which he felt for Alice Percival, but he entertained the strongest possible doubt as to how she would receive any declaration of it. She had already admitted him to so much more than he could have anticipated — to her friendship and friendly intimacy, — that he hardly dared to take into consideration the idea of presuming farther, of hoping that she would recognize and return his love. Her very kindness filled him with a sense of despair. She seemed always bent upon showing him that she did not visit upon him the wrong done by another, but he was

sure that she had never for a moment entertained the idea of finding the Thornton whom she had tolerated converted into a suitor, far less of accepting a man who could offer her little or nothing beside a name that was the last she could possibly wish to bear.

When Philip reflected upon these things, he fell into depths of dejection ; but he was too sanguine of disposition, too happily constituted in nature, to remain there very long. He said to himself that he would not look forward ; he would enjoy the present ; he would not grasp at a shadow which would probably elude him, and lose the substantial good that was already his. It was much — it was almost enough to be Alice Percival's friend, even without hope of becoming more. But, nevertheless, such hope lurked at the bottom of his heart. A French sentence that he had met somewhere was often in his mind at this time : "*Je jette mon passé dans la miséricorde de Dieu, mon présent dans son amour, et mon*

amour dans sa providence." He might leave it there with safety, he was sure.

In this frame of mind he made his preparations to go out to the country for the last time. He was received, as usual, with the utmost kindness by Mrs. Percival, who told him Alice had walked across the fields to a little church, which they had several times visited together. "I think she has gone to decorate the altar," her mother added.

Philip, who knew that this was generally her occupation on Saturday afternoon, had no doubt of it, and said that he would go to meet her. He set out, therefore, and soon found himself near the rustic church in question. Entering, he saw Alice kneeling before the Altar of the Blessed Virgin. He did not carry the Church calendar very well in his mind, but when he saw that she had placed on this altar a heart of crimson roses, transfixing a sword formed of white ones, he knew that the next day would be the Feast of the Seven Dolors. He knelt and recommended himself, his future, and

his hopes to the gentle Mother of Mercy, then followed Miss Percival when she rose and left the church.

She greeted him with a smile, and in the soft September sunset they walked across the fields by a path which followed closely a pretty, brawling stream. The thought which was uppermost in Philip's mind soon found expression. "I am so sorry," he said, "that this is one of our last walks in this pleasant place."

"I am sorry, too," she answered. "But, after all, if things did not end, we should grow tired of them; so it is better that they should end while one feels regret for them."

"Perhaps it is," he said, smiling; "but you know I am never quite able to imitate the cheerfulness of your philosophy. I should think you would dislike exceedingly to return to the city, which is still very disagreeable, and to the drudgery of teaching."

"I have found that the only way to get on in life with comfort to one's self or to

others, is by accepting things as they come, with what courage and cheerfulness one can muster, and without considering whether they are agreeable or disagreeable," she replied, simply. "What good does it do to say to one's self, 'This thing is unendurable !' if it must be endured ?"

"Oh ! no good at all, of course ; but how is one to help it ? And sometimes it need not be endured, you know. Many people endure nothing disagreeable which they can avoid."

"But there must be things which they can not avoid, and the fact that they have never endured anything willingly must make unwilling suffering harder to bear. I am not sure but that, even as far as this world is concerned, those who follow duty, and do not shrink from sacrifice, have the best of it."

"It may be," said Philip, who could not help the shade of doubt in his tone ; "yet to follow duty and not to shrink from sacrifice is often terribly hard to human nature."

"I wonder," he added, meditatively, "if I should have the strength for it? I have never been tried — yet."

"I think you do yourself injustice. You *have* been tried — in a measure, at least — and you have stood the test," she observed. "Have you not given up much, sacrificed much, from a sense of duty?"

"I can not feel that I have," he answered. "I really can not think that I deserve the least credit for declining to make a mercenary marriage, and gaining the inestimable boon of freedom thereby. I am afraid that if I had been in love with Constance, I might have thought less of the difference of religion."

"And I am sure that you again do yourself injustice," she remarked. "I am sure that for a great end — and a point of principle is a great end — you could make even such a sacrifice as that."

"You give me faith in myself," said he, in a tone which showed how much he was moved. "But you do not know — you can

not tell how hard the sacrifice would be if it were demanded in such a form. *I know — now.*"

His voice sank over the last word. It was scarcely audible, and Alice did not feel bound to answer. They walked on silently for several minutes, during which it seemed to Philip as if his heart leaped to his lips, and could with difficulty be restrained from pouring forth all that filled it. But he feared that by speaking he might end this association, which he so much valued, and with a great effort he held back the words that burned for utterance. He was quite pale from the effect of the restraint which he had laid upon himself, when presently he spoke again.

"I hope that you are right. I hope that if the trial came I should not be lacking in the power to do what was demanded of me. But I am not certain of it, and you must not think too poorly of me when I say that I trust it may never come."

"The most confident people are not those

who stand most firmly when the hour of trial comes," she said, smiling slightly. "But I, too, certainly hope that it may never come for you."

They walked on again silently for a moment or two, and Alice was on the point of speaking on another and indifferent subject, when she perceived on the path before them the figure of a child running toward them. "Is not that one of the children from the house?" she asked quickly. "Can he be coming for us?"

"Coming to join us very likely," answered Philip, who objected strongly to having his *tete-à-tete* interrupted. "You spoil them by too much tolerance."

"I am afraid my mother is ill," said she, hastening her steps.

"Oh! no: he is bringing something: do you not see?" asked Philip. And indeed the boy as he ran waived some object in the air above his head.

"It is a letter—a telegram perhaps," said Alice. "It must be for you."

She was right. When the breathless boy reached them, he could only hold out the yellow envelope, which evidently contained a telegraphic despatch, and which was addressed to Philip. With a word of apology, the latter opened it, read the enclosure, and then handed it to his companion. She in turn read these words :

“ We have reached home Your uncle is very ill and asks for you. Come at once.

“ **HARRIET THORNTON.**”

XVIII.

It was like a dream to Philip when he found himself in the night express, hurrying back to Riverport. Every other feeling was merged in that of concern for his uncle, and reawakened affection and gratitude. He was eager to reach him, yet the hour at which he arrived in the city (4 a.m.) made him hesitate to disturb the household. But the urgency of his aunt's message decided him to do so. "Come at once," she had said ; and he could not bring himself to entertain the idea of the least delay.

Consequently, he was driven immediately to the house ; and no sooner did his carriage stop, than the hall-door was opened by a servant evidently on the watch for him. "How is my uncle ?" he asked breathlessly ; and the reply relieved his greatest fear. Mr. Thornton was better : he was resting easily ; and one of the doctors had left

the house, though another remained in attendance. Mrs. Thornton had gone to lie down, and the servant respectfully suggested to Philip that he should do the same. But the young man could not be satisfied until he had seen the doctor and heard his opinion.

“Ask him if he will be kind enough to see me for a few minutes,” he said. “I will wait for him in the library.”

He entered that apartment as he spoke. Lights were burning here as elsewhere in the house, and the aspect of the familiar room — the room in which he had last seen his uncle — smote him like a blow. He looked at the chair in which Mr. Thornton had sat the night they parted, and its emptiness seemed to bring over him a fresh and vivid sense of their estrangement. The sadness of alienation and the uncertainty of life were presented to him with a force which only the near presence or danger of death can produce. “Could I have acted otherwise?” he asked himself, mournfully, while

he regarded the chair that in its vacancy seemed to reproach him.

Upon these thoughts the entrance of the doctor broke. He came in and shook hands with Philip, looking the while so grave that the young man's heart sank. He dreaded to utter the question which trembled on his lips, and which the doctor after an instant anticipated.

"You will find Mr. Thornton very ill," he said.

"Dangerously ill?" asked Philip, quickly.

"Very dangerously ill," was the reply. "Indeed, I always think it best to speak plainly, and must tell you that I have no hope of his recovery."

Philip fairly staggered under these unexpected words. His own vague fears had been one thing, but this positive announcement was quite another.

"It is impossible!" he gasped. "There *must* be some hope of his recovery! Why,

when I saw my uncle last he was in perfect health."

"Very far from it," said the physician, gravely. "Mr. Thornton has not been in perfect health for a long time, but he was very anxious that his condition should not be suspected. He went abroad at my earnest recommendation, because I thought that his mind should be relieved as far as possible of business cares. But his health was more fatally undermined than I thought. He was taken ill in Paris, then again in New York, and it is wonderful that he has reached home alive. His strength of will and his tenacity of life are both remarkable; but I do not think he can live more than a few days at longest."

Philip sank down in the vacant chair that a few minutes before had seemed to reproach him. "Does *he* know?" he asked.

"Yes," the doctor answered. "He is not a man whom it is possible to deceive. His mind is clear, and he insisted upon know-

ing how much life he could reckon upon. I told him, and he at once asked for you."

"That was — ?"

"Yesterday, soon after he arrived."

"And when can I see him ?"

"He will probably ask for you as soon as he rouses again. He is now under the influence of the opiates which we were forced to employ to subdue the pain he was enduring. I do not anticipate any very violent return of that. The worst is over. But he will now sink rapidly."

"Then," said Philip, starting to his feet, "I should see him without delay."

The doctor lifted his hand with a gesture of authority. "Have I not told you that he is under the influence of opiates ?" he asked. "When he rouses his mind will be clear, and we can keep up his strength for some time by stimulants. Do not fear : I will let you know as soon as it is possible for you to see him. Meanwhile you had better lie down and take some rest."

This was a recommendation which Philip

felt altogether unable to follow. After the departure of the physician, he walked to one of the windows and opened it. Dawn was brightening in the East, and the cool freshness of the morning air came to his brow and eyes with a reviving touch. In the midst of the roseate glow which showed where the sun would presently appear, one bright star still gleamed and caught his regard, turning his thoughts to Her whose loveliest title is Morning Star. He remembered that on this day the Church made solemn commemoration of Her great sorrows, and his heart rose up, as it were, with a passionate impulse to implore Her powerful intercession for the soul so near to death, and bearing a weight of unacknowledged sin and wrong. To his mind, almost to his lips, came some lines of a poet who should have been more Christian than he was :

“ Oh ! when our need is uttermost,
 Think that to such as death may strike
 Thou once wert sister sisterlike !
 Thou headstone of humanity,

Groundstone of the great Mystery ;
Fashioned like us, yet more than we !”

He thought of Alice Percival and her prayers. He knew that to-day her supplications would meet his in the sword-pierced Heart of Mary, and the consciousness gave him a hope — a sense of strength and powerful succor which he would otherwise have lacked. It nerved his resolution. Whatever else should be said or left unsaid in the ear of the dying man, he determined that he would make one last appeal to his conscience, one last prayer that he would call upon the Church for those great Sacraments which smooth the path of death, and open the gate of Paradise.

It was several hours after this when he was at last admitted to his uncle's chamber. His first feeling when he entered was one of shocked amazement. Could this be, indeed, the man whom he had seen last in robust health and strength ?—this invalid, with his pale, wan countenance, his hollow cheeks and sunken eyes ? The ravages of

disease, the marks of intense physical suffering, and the near approach of death, were so evident that he could not speak ; he could only grasp the hand that was extended to him, while a gleam of pleasure came into the sick man's eyes.

"I am glad that I have lived to see you again, Phil," he said. "I thought once — over yonder — that I should not."

"My dear uncle," replied Philip, with a break in his voice, "you must know that I would have gone across the world to you at a word, a hint of your danger."

"Yes, I think you would," observed the other. "But you might not have reached — However, here I am, at home once more, though I have only come home to die, the doctors tell me. It is hard to die, Phil, when one has everything to enjoy here, and — nothing beyond."

Philip felt as if his heart were wrung by unavailing pity and pain. It was so terribly true. Everything to enjoy here, and beyond — nothing ! This man, who had spent his

life and sacrificed his conscience in the pursuit of wealth, had made to himself no friends with that mammon of unrighteousness. No deeds of charity had gone before him, no blessings of the poor would waft his soul to heaven. It was too late now for the amassing of such treasure, but he might yet do one deed of justice, which would lighten the awful reckoning to come. But how to suggest this without rousing the old anger and provoking the old refusal, Philip hardly knew. Yet he could not let the opening pass.

"Yes, it is hard," he said, in a tone charged with the deepest feeling. "But faith assures us that there is much beyond for one who believes and — repents."

"Faith !" repeated Mr. Thornton. "Ah ! let me tell you that if a man has once relaxed his hold on faith he can not summon it back at will — not even though he be on his death-bed. I am certain of nothing, except that I must leave all that I see and know and possess, for—" [He paused, some-

thing like a spasm came over his face, his voice sank lower.] "If the things that I was taught and that you believe are true, for what?" he asked, looking at the young man with an appealing glance.

It was a terrible question, but Philip dared not hesitate in his reply. He knelt down by the side of the bed, and took the sick man's hand. "For the judgment of God," he said. "There can be no doubt of that. But you have time to prepare for it. You can set your conscience in order, you can make restitution for any wrong that you have done, and you can find peace and forgiveness in the Sacraments which the Church offers you. My dear uncle, you have never renounced your religion, though you have long neglected it. Let me send at once for a priest."

The other shrank at that word. "A priest!" he exclaimed. "I do not wish to have anything to do with priests. They are — overbearing. Do you not think a man

may have sincere repentance and be forgiven by God without a priest ?”

“I should doubt,” said Philip, gravely, “the sincerity of the repentance which refuses to approach God in the way which He has indicated as the way to approach Him. Repentance — sincere contrition — might be sufficient for one who did not know the way; but *you* know it.”

Mr. Thornton uttered a sigh which was almost a groan. “If a priest come,” he said, “he would exact too much.”

Philip started. Had his uncle, then, more on his conscience than he suspected ?

“Let us speak frankly,” he answered — fortunately they were alone, Mr. Thornton having insisted on even the nurse leaving the room, — “I do not know what amount of restitution might be demanded of you, but if it were the half or the whole of your fortune, surely it would be well made to bring you peace of mind.”

Mr. Thornton frowned. Even at this hour his pride rose. “It would not approach the

half of my fortune," he said. "The mere money, you — none of you — would miss. But the acknowledgment — after all these years — that would be hard. See, Philip, might it not answer if I left in your hands the power to do whatever you thought right?"

Philip's heart leaped for an instant. Was it, then, to be his, the privilege of making restitution? But the next moment he saw that this was impossible.

"I do not think," he said, "that it would be the same thing. It would not be *your* act: it would be *my* casting, as it were, a reproach on your memory for what you had left undone. No, my dear uncle: let me implore you to do the thing yourself. If you meant in your kindness to leave me anything, take that for the purpose, and leave me nothing. I should be far happier in the thought that you had cleared your name and your conscience, than in the possession of any fortune you could give me."

The sick man seemed touched. His eyes

softened as he looked at the pleading face bent over him. "You are not like most heirs," he said. "And this brings me to the chief thing for which I wanted to see you — for which I wanted to reach home. My will is not yet made, and there must be no further delay about it. Listen, Philip. If I do what you ask, for which you are so anxious, will you do what *I* ask, for which I am equally anxious — will you marry Constance?"

"Will I — marry Constance!" repeated Philip. His heart, which a moment before had leaped up so eagerly, seemed now to stand still. What could he say? To marry Constance meant to surrender all hope of happiness for himself. His whole nature cried out against it as impossible; yet even in the same moment he knew that it might be a thing to which he must submit — the costly sacrifice demanded of him to gain the end he had in view. A little before he would have said that he could not hesitate at anything to gain this end — to restore to the

Percivals what was justly theirs; and, more, far more, to induce his uncle to cleanse his soul before going to meet his God. And now when the way by which this might be done was indicated to him, dared he hold back because his own happiness would suffer shipwreck? Some words of Alice Percival's when they had walked together the evening before, returned to his memory: "I am sure that for a great end you could make even such a sacrifice as that." The occasion for sacrifice had come sooner than either could have dreamed, and should he prove that he was *not* capable of it? For what greater end could be imagined than to accomplish that for which they had both prayed?

"Well," said Mr. Thornton, looking at the pale face, which was an index of the struggle within, "how is it to be? I have no time to lose, you know."

Philip was well aware of that. The doctor had warned him that there should be no delay in whatever business had to be transacted. "I can answer for him to-day," he

said, "but no longer." The decision, then, must be made at once. One short, sharp instant of longer combat, and then the young man spoke :

"Yes, I will do what you ask — I will marry Constance, if she will consent to marry me — if you will send for a priest, and make whatever restitution he holds to be just and necessary."

Mr. Thornton extended his hand. "You promise on your honor ?" he said.

"I promise on my honor."

"Then send for a priest — I have no choice : whoever you please — and my lawyer."

XIX.

THE priest and the lawyer came and did their work. The first reconciled to God the soul that had wandered so long and so far from Him ; the second prepared the last will and testament for the dying man for his signature. Before signing, however, the latter insisted that Philip should read the will ; and Philip understood why when he came to the clause which declared that, filled with a sense of his injustice toward the heirs of Robert Percival, the testator restored to them the value of the property which the said Robert Percival had made over to him for reasons duly set forth. The amount stated was large ; but, as Mr. Thornton had affirmed, he could pay it and still remain a very wealthy man. The residue of his fortune, after providing handsomely for Mrs. Thornton, was left to Philip, who was also appointed the executor of the will.

"Well," said the sick man, as his nephew laid down the paper, and their eyes met, "are you satisfied?"

"I am more than satisfied with your restitution," the young man answered. "But for the rest let me beg you to provide for Constance also."

"Have I not provided for her?—have you not promised to marry her?"

"Yes," Philip replied, with a freshly-sinking heart; "but what if she should decline to marry me?"

"She will not decline," said Mr. Thornton. "If she does, why should I provide for her? She is no blood of mine."

"She is your adopted daughter."

"Her aunt's rather; and she will provide for her if need be. There will be no need, however, if she is your wife; and a wife should not be independent of her husband."

Philip made no reply to this very masculine opinion; he was thinking how everything conspired to rivet more firmly the bond he had assumed. As if his word of

honor was not enough, there was left in his hands the entire fortune, which should (he felt) have been divided between Constance and himself, making him more than ever bound to share this fortune with her in the way his uncle indicated and intended. And, since it was to be so, did it matter, after all, how the money was left? He yielded without another word of protest.

"I will do all that I have promised — all that you desire," he said. "Be certain of that."

"I am certain," replied his uncle. "I have not lived to my age without learning who to trust. Now call in the witnesses, and let me sign."

The witnesses — one of whom was the attending physician — were summoned, and requested to witness the signature of Mr. Thornton. After he had written his name in a clear though trembling hand, he watched them affix theirs, and then let his head fall back on its pillows, with a perceptible change in his whole expression. It was as

if the will-power which had sustained him to this point now suddenly failed. The doctor placed his hand on his pulse, and looked significantly at Philip. "The business was not done an hour too soon," he said, a little later.

And indeed from this time the flame of life sank lower and lower. Partial unconsciousness soon set in, from which the dying man roused now and then to recognize those about him, and to utter a few words, but relapsed again very soon into the comatose state. It was during one of these brief intervals that his eye fell upon Constance, who was standing at the side of his bed, and he made an effort to address her.

"It is all settled, Constance," he said. "You are to marry Philip, and everything will be as I planned, only I — I shall not see it." Then he glanced at Philip. "Is it agreed between you?" he asked.

"It is agreed on my part," answered the young man. He moved to the side of the girl, and took her hand. "My uncle desires

our marriage very much, Constance," he said; "and I have promised him that I will again offer myself to you — this time without any condition; and I beg you, if you can accept me, to say so now, and let our betrothal take place here at his bedside."

Certainly such a declaration, made at such a time, might excuse some agitation in the person receiving it; yet it seemed to Philip as if Constance's agitation was greater than even the occasion warranted. She was pale to her lips and trembling visibly, while her reply was altogether inaudible.

"What does she say?" asked Mr. Thornton. "Does she promise to marry you?"

"Will you not promise, Constance?" urged Philip, earnestly, determined that there should be no lack of effort on his side to fulfil his pledges to the dying man. In a lower tone he added: "Speak quickly, if you wish to gratify him before it is too late."

She started, and murmured: "If it will gratify him, I — I promise —"

Her voice broke off. It seemed to Philip as if she wished to add more, but sank into frightened silence, as Mr. Thornton, with a faint smile, held out his hand.

"That is well," he said. "Your life is assured, as I — wished it. And Philip will do what is right. You may — trust Philip."

These were almost his last intelligible words. He roused once or twice again, but his utterances were disconnected, and finally between midnight and morning his soul passed quietly away.

Philip's grief was deep and sincere. All his affection for his uncle (which had suffered only a temporary eclipse) had revived, and he felt keenly the pang of parting. Yet with the grief was mingled a sense of almost awed thanksgiving. It was so wonderful that this soul, after long years of hardness and indifference, should have returned to God at the last ! He thought of Her on whose Feast of Sorrow this miracle of mercy had been wrought, and his heart rose up in gratitude for the grace which, he

was sure, had come through her powerful hands. The recollection of the Sacraments which the dying man had received — those Sacraments which opened the door of heaven to him — and the sight of the religious emblems about his bier — the crucifix ; the blessed candles — touched the young man indescribably, as if he saw visible before his eyes the infinite mercy of God. If the share which he had in bringing about the result occurred to him at all, it was only that he might think how little the sacrifice of his own happiness seemed in comparison with what he had gained by that sacrifice. He knew that this period of exaltation would pass, and that the bitterness of the renunciation which he had made, and the bond which he had accepted, would perhaps overwhelm him later. But just now he could think only of what had been gained, not of the price it had cost

All responsibility fell upon him in these days. Mrs. Thornton was prostrated by her husband's sudden death, following so

closely upon their hurried journey; and she was also somewhat resentful of the fact that a priest had been called to him. It was Philip's work, she said to herself and others. When Mr. Thornton was in health, and in the full possession of his faculties, he had given up "Romanism" entirely, and, of course, if he had asked for a clergyman, she would have sent for her own. But Philip saw him, worked upon his weakness, and sent for a priest. It was like Philip, who had proved himself a perfect bigot in religious matters, but it was necessarily very disagreeable to her. It decided her not to attend the funeral. "I might have made an effort if it had been in my own church," she said; "but under the circumstances I can not think of it."

So the funeral arrangements were left entirely in Philip's hands, and the lifeless body of the man who had not crossed the threshold of a Catholic church for years was borne once more within the sanctuary for the solemn blessing of the Church. As

the pale, young chief mourner followed the coffin toward the altar, his ear was filled with the solemn chant which the choir was singing, and he recognized the clear and silvery voice that rose above all the rest. "*Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine. Et lux perpetua luceat eis,*" it sang; and Philip knew that Alice Percival echoed in her soul the words uttered by her lips. That she should sing the *requiem* of the man who had injured her, and who, so far as she knew, had died without making any atonement, seemed to the listener but another exquisite touch in this miracle of mercy and charity. At such a moment the world seemed far removed with all its canons, struggles, and temptations; and sacrifice itself was sweet with the blessing of God.

But the world asserted itself in a very disagreeable fashion when the will was opened and read. Mrs. Thornton was as angry as the gentleness of her nature would permit. She was indignant at the restitution made to the Percivals, more indignant that no

provision was made for Constance, and most indignant that she herself, though amply dowered, was allowed no part in the settlement of the estate, and that Philip's inheritance was largely in excess of her own. To the young man she spoke some very bitter words.

"I never underrated your influence over your uncle," she said ; "but I confess that I could not have suspected that you would use it to such a purpose. If he had not been weak — if he had not been dying, you could never have done so. He would never have admitted that he had anything to restore to those Percivals ; for I have heard him say often how much he had lost by that man."

"One views things differently," replied Philip, gravely, "when one looks at them by the light of the world and by the light of eternity. My uncle was face to face with eternity when he made his will, and he knew that the debts which man does not pay

for himself, God will exact with terrible justice."

"I have no doubt that you told him such things — you and the priest — and frightened him into an act of folly and weakness," said Mrs. Thornton, resentfully. "And did you work upon him by the same means to leave poor Constance nothing — Constance who had been ready to obey and gratify him, while *you*, who disobeyed and refused to gratify him, have everything?"

Philip flushed deeply. No consciousness of rectitude will entirely take away the sting of being cruelly misjudged.

"On the contrary," he answered, "I begged my uncle to provide for Constance, but he preferred to leave that to me. I had already promised him to marry her — if she would consent."

"In other words, you agreed to marry her in order to get the whole fortune into your hands," said Mrs. Thornton. "I understand perfectly. But whether such con-

duct was worthy of a gentleman and a man of honor is another question."

Philip rose to his feet. "You will pardon me if I say that you do not understand me at all," he answered. "This matter, however, concerns Constance, and it is to her that I will justify myself. You heard her promise to marry me, as we stood together by my uncle's bedside. After that, does it matter to which of us the property was left?"

"It matters that she would have been free to reject you if she had been endowed with what should have been hers," rejoined Mrs. Thornton, hastily.

"Free to break her word to the dead?" asked Philip. "Believe me, if she wishes such freedom as that, I will take care that it is secured to her. But I am sure that you speak without reflection. I can not imagine that she desires freedom from her promise any more than I desire freedom from mine."

With this he left the room, feeling that he could not trust himself to remain longer; and Mrs. Thornton shed some tears of mingled anger and self reproach. In her heart she knew that he did not deserve the reproaches she had uttered, but her exasperation was so great that she could not altogether regret them.

Philip on his part made no immediate effort to see Constance. Wounded and jarred by the interview with his aunt, he could not face at once what might be worse even than that. He remembered how Constance had shrunk and trembled when called upon to declare whether or not she would marry him, and though she had promised at last, how reluctantly that promise had been made. He was sorry for her, while he dreaded his first meeting with her. "I fear that my poor uncle has provided unhappy lives for both of us," he thought, with a sigh, "As far as I am concerned, I have accepted it with my eyes open, and I have been repaid. But Constance has nothing

to repay her, poor girl ! She does not care for anything that I can offer ; and, indeed, I can only offer loyalty."

Because he could only offer loyalty he felt the more bound to preserve this without a stain, and so he determined to pay without delay the necessary visit, which, in his quality of executor, he must pay to the Percivals — a visit which would be his farewell to the happiness and hope that had brightened his life for a time. He would bid adieu to Alice Percival, and all possibilities that had lain for him in her gentle eyes, before he held out his hand to Constance in fulfilment of his promise.

Provided, then, with a copy of that clause of the will which restored a fortune to the wife and daughter of Robert Percival, he took his way once more to the modest home to which they had returned from the country. The small servant-maid who answered the door told him that Mrs. Percival was to ill to receive any one, but that Miss

Percival, who was at home, could probably see him. She ushered him therefore into the little well-known parlor, and left him for some minutes to his own reflections.

XX.

It seemed to Philip a considerable time, but it was not in reality very long, before the door opened and Alice Percival stood before him. She held out her hand with an expression of exquisite sympathy.

"I am glad to see you," she said. "I have thought of you and felt for you very much."

The words were simple, but the sweetness of her tone moved him indescribably.

"You are always kind," he said ; "and I have much to thank you for beside your sympathy. I am sure that your prayers aided to bring about the result for which you asked with such pure charity. My uncle was reconciled to the Church before he died."

"I know, and I was very glad."

"I am sure of that, too. But, as you are well aware, he had atonement to make as

well as repentance to feel. I have come to tell you that he made it."

She looked at him, but said nothing; and, drawing the paper he had brought from his pocket, he went on :

"Here," he said, "is a copy of the clause in his will which restores to your mother and yourself all that was taken from your father. You can not hesitate to receive it" — she made a slight motion as if drawing back from the paper he offered, — "because he explicitly states that he restores it as an act of justice. Will you not read what he dictated with his dying lips ?"

The gentle entreaty prevailed over her reluctance. She took the paper and opened it. Philip saw that she paled as she read the words written within, and that the breath came quickly through her parted lips. When she looked up at him her large, dark eyes were full of surprise and doubt, mingled with pity.

"Poor man ;" she breathed rather than said, softly. "I am rejoiced for his own

sake that he did this — that he went with a clear conscience to meet the justice of God ; but I can not feel that it is possible for my mother and myself to accept — all that is stated here.”

“It is all rightfully yours,” answered Philip. “I have verified every item, as I am the executor of the will. You *must* accept it; for it is yours, and yours only.”

“But I have never heard that my father was so wealthy a man as this implies.”

“You forget that my uncle is accounting not only for the property which he received, but also for its increase in value during the years that it remained in his hands. Consult your mother, consult your lawyer, consult whom you will, Miss Percival; but be sure that everyone will tell you that this is justly yours; while *I* tell you that you have no right to refuse what is purely and simply a restitution.”

She still regarded him doubtfully. “If,” she said at length, “you can assure me that there is nothing here which is not strictly

ours — nothing which has been added as an atonement, perhaps —”

“I assure you,” responded Philip, as she paused, “that my uncle intended only to restore what he felt was not justly his own ; and he was too exact a business man to have made any error in doing so. He certainly did not restore a farthing more than was necessary. If you have any confidence in me, I beg you to believe this.”

“I have such confidence in you,” she observed in a low tone, “that I feel as if it were your restitution rather than his.”

“You must not do him that injustice,” said Philip, earnestly. “It is his own, and may it avail much for him before God !”

“Amen,” she answered, softly.

A brief pause followed, while Philip asked himself how much he should tell her of the circumstances of his position. He had not decided, when she spoke again.

“At least,” she said, “I am certain of one thing.— though it is *his* restitution, he would never have made it but for you.”

"Perhaps not," the young man answered. "Yet I do not for a moment think that my influence alone, or chiefly, brought it about. Other influences far more powerful did that. I only thank God that I was able to be with him at the last, to urge on him the importance of the duty. But he did not yield without a struggle, and, I was not victorious without a sacrifice."

Her eyes, still fastened on him, were full of sympathy and interest. "We are told that nothing is worth much which is not bought by sacrifice," she said. "Yet I hope that yours was not very great."

"It is the greatest that could have been demanded of me," he replied. "I promised to marry Constance."

His voice sank over the last words, and silence followed for a moment, until Alice, holding out the paper he had given her, said, with a manifest effort :

"You promised that, to secure *this* ?"

"No," he answered, "not to secure that, but to secure the reconciliation with God

of which it is but a visible sign. I should not have told you, only I knew that you would hear of my — engagement. And, since we have spoken of the matter before, I wish you to know why it has taken place. Others, who will not know, will say that I have sold myself. That is true, but you will believe that the price was not a fortune but a soul."

"Have you not proved," she said, in a voice full of feeling, "that a fortune could not tempt you? But was it — necessary?"

"Yes. He would not have yielded on his side unless I had yielded on mine. And can you conceive that I would ever have consented if it had not been not alone necessary, but indispensable? Ah!" — with a sudden inflection of passion in his voice — "surely you must know better than that! Surely you must understand how great the sacrifice was!"

She was mute, only the paper slipped from her fingers to the floor.

"I should have no right to tell you that

I love you," Philip went on, "if I had the faintest shadow of hope that you would, under any circumstances, think of me. But I have none. I have never misunderstood your kindness, nor based the least dream upon it. I know well that I did not surrender *you* in making this sacrifice, but I surrendered the happiness of thinking of you, and the far greater happiness of seeing you and being with you; for after to-day I shall not voluntarily see you again. You now know why. It was due to you and to myself that you should know."

He rose, as if he had said his last word, and, stooping, picked up the paper lying at her feet. "Will you show this to Mrs. Percival," he said, "and tell her that, as the executor of my uncle's will, I shall lose no time in transferring to her and to you all that has been so long withheld from you?"

Their fingers met as she took the paper from him, and the next moment their eyes met also. What was it in hers that made Philip start as if an electric shock had

passed over him ? "Alice !" he cried, involuntarily, like one from whom an utterance is sharply wrung.

She laid her hand on his with a touch as restraining as it was soft. "Are you glad or sorry," she said, "that the sacrifice is not all on your side ?"

He flung himself on his knees beside her chair. "Oh ! I am sorry — God knows that I am sorry !" he cried. "If I had dreamed — if I had dared to dream of such a thing for a moment, I could never have consented !"

"Then I thank God that you did not dream of it," she continued ; "though I think you wrong yourself—I think you would have been strong enough for the sacrifice even had you known. You remember" (with a faint, sweet smile) "I told you that I knew you would be when the occasion came ?"

"I thought of your words," he said, "and they helped to give me the strength I needed. But they might not have given

it if I had known how great the sacrifice was."

"Could any sacrifice, not wrong in itself, be too great for such an end?"

He looked at her with a passion of appeal in his eyes. "I might have thought that, I might have felt that, an hour ago," he said; "but now I can only realize that I held happiness in my grasp, and that I have lost it."

"Happiness is not all that we have to live for," she remarked, gently.

"Not at all," he answered, "but much, very much, to weak human hearts; and my heart dies within me when I think what I have so narrowly missed."

"God will give you some great good to atone for it," she said. "I am sure of that."

"He can give me no earthly good so great as this which I have lost," replied the young man, with despair in his voice. "For it is not only happiness that I have lost in losing you, but a great, an inestimable

good. I can not tell you — at least not in this bitter moment — all that you have been to me since I knew you first — all the inspiration to better things than my life knew before ; all the revelation of excellence, all the help in a battle where I should else have been overcome. And, in return, what have I done for you ? Had not one Thornton injured you enough, that another should cast even a passing shadow on your life ? I had a right to sacrifice myself, but not you.”

She was almost frightened by his vehemence — by the sudden kindling of his passion at that light which he had read in her eyes. She did not know how strong was the tension in which he had held himself before, nor how inevitable this moment of reaction was, even had not the knowledge that had burst upon him hastened and intensified it.

“ Listen to me,” she said, earnestly, “ and believe me when I tell you that I am glad — glad from the bottom of my heart — to

have a share in the sacrifice which has won so great a grace. We did not think of suffering together when we prayed together for this which has come to pass ; but we should have remembered that nothing great was ever accomplished without suffering. Do not think of me ; think only of fulfilling the duty to which you are bound by your conscience and by your honor. For the rest, if one Thornton injured me — which I do not remember — another has more than atoned for it. Never forget that.”

“When shall I ever forget *you* ?” said Philip. “You talk like an angel, but I, God help me ! — feel like a man. It is true that my conscience and my honor bind me, but where shall I find the strength for that which lies before me ?”

“You do not need for me to tell you where it is to be found,” she answered ; “nor yet that a sacrifice must be voluntary in order to have merit. You, who have made yours so bravely, are you going to fail now, because you have learned that another has

some share in it ? Nay, let us make it together, a free offering, trusting to God for the help and courage that can not fail."

Her words sounded in his soul like the trumpet which calls a soldier to battle. He rose to his feet, and stood before her pale and grave.

"You shame me," he said, "and you give me the courage of which you speak. Yes, a voluntary sacrifice alone has merit. I will go and try to make mine voluntary, while you —"

"Will pray," she said, as he paused. Then she extended her hand, adding, softly, "God be with you !"

He took it as the adieu which she intended; and unable to trust himself to utter another word, he kissed her hand silently and went out, feeling like a man who had received a mortal wound.

But it was not mortal. By the help of God, the higher part of the soul triumphed in the struggle that followed,—one of those struggles that have no witness save God,

when all the inner man is torn by strife, when nature cries out against the law that is imposed upon it — the terrible law of renunciation, which grace alone can render possible,— when the things of sense press so closely, and the things of faith seem removed so far away. It was well for Philip that he took refuge in the first church to which he came. Only there, kneeling before the altar, could he have found the strength to overcome himself, to resist the insistent demands of his heart, to gird himself up, as it were, for the sacrifice that he offered, and to go forth at length, resolved that there should be no delay in that which must be done.

XXI.

WHEN Philip reached home—at least the house which had been home to him for many years, but which, by the terms of her husband's will, was now Mrs. Thornton's for the period of her natural life—he sent a message to Constance, asking if he might see her. The messenger was long in returning, but presently brought the reply that Miss Irving would see him in her aunt's sitting-room. Remembering their last interview in that room, Philip almost wished that she had chosen another apartment; but, reminding himself that it mattered very little where he said the few words which it was necessary for him to say, he went up stairs and entered the pretty *boudoir*.

To his surprise it was unoccupied, and he waited several minutes before a door leading into his aunt's chamber opened, and Constance made her appearance. He was at

once struck by a change in her, which was too great to be accounted for by her heavy mourning draperies, or the grief they indicated. He had hardly met her since her return, save on the memorable occasion at his uncle's bedside, and he thought that he had never seen any one so much altered. She was pale and thin, her eyes were heavy as if from many tears, and her manner was nervous and restrained. She came in, gave him her hand almost without a word, and then sat down listlessly in a chair which he drew forward for her.

There was a moment's silence. Philip, who was himself calm with the calmness of resolution and despair, hesitated for an instant, hardly knowing how to open the subject which must be discussed between them; while Constance, after a brief reply to his greetings, looked studiously away from him. He could not tell that she was making an effort for self-control, and the apparent indifference of her manner made him think that, after all, he might as well plunge

at once into what had to be said. Indeed, there seemed nothing else to do, and therefore he began :

"I am glad that you have been able to see me, Constance ; for I think you will agree with me that the sooner everything is settled between us, the better."

"Yes," answered Constance, without turning her head, "I certainly agree with you, the sooner it is settled the better."

"Then," said Philip, "may I understand that you are ready to fulfil the engagement which we entered into at my uncle's bedside ?"

She hesitated for an instant, then rose abruptly from her chair and faced him. "Are *you* ready on your side ?" she demanded.

He looked surprised. "Surely you know that," he said. "My promise has been given to my uncle and to you. If you will marry me, Constance," he held out his hand, "I will do all that is in my power to make you happy."

"You are very kind," she said, coldly. "I suppose you gave up your religious scruples for the sake of your fortune which was left, undivided, to you. You did wisely, for now you can enjoy both the fortune and the scruples. I — can not marry you."

"Constance!" (He drew back amazed.)
"You forget your promise!"

"No, I do not forget," she cried, with sudden passion. "I fear I shall never forget! It is a dreadful thing to deceive — to lie to the dying; and that I did from sheer cowardice. I knew when I promised to marry you that I could not do so."

"But why not? — what can prevent your marrying me?"

"The simple fact that I am married to another man."

If she had discharged a pistol in his face he could not have been more astounded. Even the sense of relief was for a moment lost in overwhelming surprise. "Married!" he repeated. "When? — to whom?"

"To Jack Bellamy, before I went abroad. It was an act of folly that I have repented — but it is done."

Done ! Then *he* was free ! The room seemed whirling around with Philip in the suddenness of this realization — in the rush of happiness which overpowered him. For a minute he could not control himself sufficiently to speak, but at length he said, gently .

"Will you not sit down again, and let us speak of this ? I am sorry that my uncle did not know it."

"I meant to tell him," answered Constance, sinking into her chair, "but he grew desperately ill so quickly at the last. And when he spoke to me that awful night, what could I say ? It seemed shameful to promise what I knew I was unable to perform, but how could I — *then* — tell the truth ?"

"It would have been hard," said Philip, "yet harder still to deceive — but it is not my place to blame you. Your own con-

science, I am sure, does that. Why were you ever led into the deception? Both my uncle and your aunt had deserved better of you."

"I know—I feel it!" she cried, with sudden tears. "It was folly, and worse. But we had been lovers — after a fashion — a long time, and when I was going away I promised for the first time to marry him. He was not satisfied with that — men are so selfish! — but he followed me to New York, said that he feared to lose me, and persuaded me in an hour of weakness to a secret marriage, which I have repented ever since."

"Forgive me if I ask why you have repented it? Is it because you have ceased to love him after having bound yourself so irrevocably?"

"Oh! no," she answered; "I like him as well as ever. But see the difficulties in which it has placed me! I have lived in a state of anxiety, I have deceived my uncle on his death-bed, and I am justly punished

by being left exactly in the position which I kept my marriage a secret to avoid."

"You mean with regard to fortune?"

"Yes. I know that he left everything to you, believing that I would certainly marry you; but what worse could he have done for me had he known that I was already married to Jack Bellamy?"

"He would have made a different will in that case," said Philip. "He was too just and too generous a man not to have given you a share of his fortune. It is my great happiness that I have the power to give it in his name. We will make an equitable division of the country, and you shall be happy with the man of your own choice.

"Oh, Philip!" she cried, with an accession of emotion, "you are too good! I have no right to expect it — my uncle never meant it — would never have wished it —"

"My uncle would certainly have wished it," said Philip, with decision. "He would have been angry, no doubt, when he learned

the truth ; but his anger would no more have lasted in your case than it did in mine, and in the end he would have done what was right. If your name is not mentioned in his will, it was because he thought he had provided for you by our engagement; and, as he told me when I urged a different arrangement on him, he did not think that a woman should be rendered independent of her husband. I ventured to differ with him on that point, however; and I have never known a keener pleasure than I shall feel in settling her own fortune on Mrs. Bellamy."

"You are the first person to call me by that name," she said, smiling through her tears. "And do you forgive me on your part for the deception of my promise?"

"My dear Constance," answered Philip, gravely, "I not only forgive you, but I thank God that we have both been preserved from the greatest of human ills—a marriage without love or sympathy. Do not mistake me. My affection for you is most sincere;

but I am, nevertheless, certain that we should have been miserable in that relation, and I am as grateful for your release as for my own."

"If you felt in that way — if you believed that we should have been miserable — you might have released yourself," she said, a little resentfully. "The fortune is all yours — there is no condition in the will. Many men would not have hesitated."

"Perhaps not," replied Philip. "There are unfortunately many men who have neither conscience nor honor. But my uncle knew well that no condition could bind me so firmly as my own promise. *That* I should never have broken."

Several expressions passed across her face as she looked at him. Perhaps she felt how rock-like was such honor as this — honor based firmly upon conscience — contrasted with her own weakness and deception. She breathed a sigh which seemed to express some such feeling.

"You are far too good for me," she said,

with strange and unexpected humility. "I am of the world, *you* belong to something higher. I have always felt it, but more of late than ever. Perhaps we have grown farther apart; at least I am sure that it is best our lives should be joined no nearer."

"It is certainly best," replied Philip, while his heart echoed the words in a deeper sense than she could understand. "My poor uncle himself would think so if he could know all. Now I will go and see Bellamy without delay. Does he know of your — promise?"

Constance mournfully indicated assent. "He has been tormenting me — by letters — ever since he heard a report of it," she said. "I have had no peace at all."

"And have you told my aunt the truth?"

"Not yet. I wanted first to see how you would take it — if you would give me up to utter reprobation."

Philip smiled slightly. "Be sure that I shall never cast a stone at you," he said. "Poor Constance! your looks tell that you

have suffered enough. Let me beg you to go and tell your aunt at once, and tell her also that I shall not fail to do what is just toward you."

So they parted. And what a different aspect earth and heaven wore to Philip's eyes compared to that which they had worn an hour before ! The relief had been so wholly unexpected, the change so wondrously great, that as soon as he lost sight of Constance he began to ask himself if it were not all a dream, from which he would awake to a hard reality of sacrifice.

In order to make sure that it was not, he went to see Bellamy, whom he found looking as pale and worn as Constance herself. He received Philip at first very coldly, but almost broke down with emotion when he learned the errand on which he had come. "By Jove, I began to think that she meant to throw me over altogether !" he said. "I have not seen her since her return, nor had more than a few vague lines. I did not wish to force her to acknowledge the marriage,

yet I began to fear that I should have to do so. It has been a very trying position — for me.”

“So much for persuading a woman to a secret marriage,” thought Philip; but he only said aloud: “It has been much more trying for her. When my uncle was dying he asked her to promise that she would marry me, and she had either to avow the truth, or to give a promise that she could not keep. She chose the latter, and it is only to-day that I have learned the facts of the case. Unfortunately, since my uncle died under a wrong impression — certain that she was betrothed to me, and therefore that her future was assured — he made no provision for her in his will. But this I shall change at once, by making the division of the property that he would have made if he had known the truth.”

“You are a fine fellow, Thornton,” said Bellamy, much moved. “I am sure you must feel as strongly convinced as I do that he would have made no such division. But

I can not refuse to let you settle on Constance what you think to be just. She has always shrunk so from the thought of poverty—it was what made her refuse to listen to me for so long, and what sealed her lips with regard to our marriage—that I should be sorry now to condemn her to the narrowness of means which she dreaded. For myself I should not mind it ; I should prefer it to taking money that Mr. Thornton would never have given. But I am not strong enough to insist on what would make her regret our marriage.”

“You would have no right to insist on it,” observed Philip. “I am the best judge of what would have been my uncle’s wishes and intentions, and I am confident he would in the end have done what was right, if Constance had dealt frankly with him. What he has left undone, I shall do in his name, and with the power he has given me. It is a great happiness to me, I assure you.”

"I really believe that it is," said Bellamy, with a smile.

And, indeed, Philip felt that he deserved no credit for his generosity. He would gladly have given not only the half but the whole of his fortune for the freedom that had come to him. When he left Bellamy he had a more keenly realizing sense of this freedom, and he turned his steps at once toward Alice Percival. Yet even on the way he paused. It was when he reached the church, where earlier in the day he had so despairingly asked for strength to make the sacrifice which seemed appointed. He had found the strength, and he had been spared the sacrifice: could he fail, then, to enter and offer thanksgiving where he had asked help? He turned in under the arched portal of the door, and trod softly up the aisle in the soft gloom of the interior. It chanced to be the same church which Alice Percival and himself had entered one June evening, to ask for his uncle the grace which had then seemed so little likely to be gained.

The recollection carried his steps to the altar of the Sacred Heart, and there—he started as he recognized the figure kneeling before it. It was Alice herself!

She did not stir or turn her head at his approach, so he knelt quietly near her, and waited for her recognition. It was long before it came, and, knowing that she was asking help in pain, rather than, like himself, returning thanks for happiness, Philip was at last on the point of attracting her attention when she arose and perceived him.

Her surprise was evidently great. He saw the sudden enlarging of her eyes, the quick pallor of her face; but she only bent her head, and with a quick movement passed him by. He rose at once and followed her. She heard his step, and when they reached the vestibule paused and turned toward him.

“I understand why you are here,” she said; “but why do you follow me? There

is nothing more for us to say to each other."

"You are mistaken," replied Philip, with a tremulous smile ; "there is something more,— something which I was on my way to tell you when I entered here. I felt that I must thank God even before I told you. And have I not need to thank Him ? Alice, I am free !"

She drew back from his eagerly extended hand, growing still paler. "How can that be?" she said. "How is it possible for you to be freed from your promise to your dead ?"

"Because a promise that can not be fulfilled, to the fulfillment of which there is an insurmountable obstacle, does not bind me. I can not marry Constance, because she is already married. I have just learned the fact, and there is no doubt of it."

"Philip !"

"Yes, my love. God has been good to us, and the sacrifice which we were ready to make is not demanded. Have I not cause

to be thankful? The freedom I resigned is restored to me, and, without any real sacrifice on my part, all that I desired has been gained : my uncle died in the Church, and made the restitution but for which I could never have dared to approach you."

It was she now who held out her hand. "The sacrifice was as real in the sight of God as if its fulfilment had been possible," she said. "Since you made it in your heart, you may surely feel that you gained for him the grace of which he had need, as *I* feel that it is you who have made the restitution. Ah, not a word ! That is a point I shall never resign. And now let us go back for a moment, to thank God for what He has given."

"My whole life must thank him for *you*," said Philip, as he opened again the inner door, and they passed into the church together.

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